How to Embed a Racial and Ethnic Equity Perspective in Research

Practical Guidance for the Research Process

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A Child Trends Working Paper

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Executive Summary

At Child Trends, we believe that social science researchers and members of the broader research community can contribute significantly to the important endeavor of embedding a racial equity lens within their research. For child and youth researchers, meeting this responsibility to promote equity requires examining disparities in child and youth outcomes by race and ethnicity. While disaggregating data is a necessary component of such research, it is not sufficient. For child and youth research to inform and improve policies, programs, and public opinion, it must also identify, explore, and explain the factors that contribute to disparate outcomes.

To achieve these goals, child and youth researchers must incorporate a racial and ethnic equity perspective across the entire research process—in study design, data collection and analysis, and interpretation and dissemination of data findings. Although child and youth researchers may be greatly interested in how to include an equity perspective in their work, there is little practical guidance for how to do so. This report aims to equip researchers with tools and resources to integrate a racial and ethnic perspective in research.

The report grew from an internal commitment by Child Trends to become more intentional and skillful in incorporating a racial and ethnic equity perspective across our research. As a first step, we scanned literature in child and youth research to find practical guidance that could help us operationalize our commitment. However, the scan and a subsequent literature review revealed few examples for practical guidance. Instead, we found resources that provide guidance on conducting culturally sensitive research. While such guidance is useful in addressing issues related to a specific culture, it does not equip researchers with tools to understand the role of race and ethnicity in a person's life trajectory, experiences, and outcomes. To adequately embed a racial and ethnic equity perspective in research, researchers should have access to tools to apply when developing research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and reporting findings that consider the racialized impact of a person's life experience.

With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Child Trends undertook to identify and develop these practical tools for researchers in the child and youth field. As part of this work, we interviewed a diverse group of 34 researchers, funders, and policymakers from across the nation to learn more about integrating a racial and ethnic equity perspective when conducting research and evaluation. The guidance in this document combines these experts' knowledge, their recommended resources, resources that we found in the literature, and the expertise of research staff at Child Trends.

Every research project is unique; there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to incorporating a racial and ethnic equity perspective in research. However, researchers might consider some overall guiding principles:

1. Examine their own backgrounds and biases.

2. Make a commitment to dig deeper into the data.
3. Recognize that the research process itself has an impact on communities, and researchers have a role in ensuring research benefits communities.
4. Engage communities as partners in research.
5. Guard against the implied or explicit assumption that white is the normative, standard, or default position.

We apply each of these principles to the major stages of the research process to further understand racial and ethnic inequities and help ensure that the research process does not perpetuate them. Below is a summary of the practices researchers might embed in each stage of the research process:

1. Landscape Assessment: Before the study begins, the researcher should gain a better understanding of the context in which the research will be conducted by engaging stakeholders to gather their perspectives on the issue or concern of interest. Community stakeholder engagement will shape the research process and may uncover root causes of the issue.
2. Design and Data Collection: The researcher should develop research questions and designs that aim to advance racial and ethnic equity. To this end, researchers can involve racially and ethnically diverse research teams, construct a research design that is accepted by the community, develop research questions that target root issues, and address equity when identifying data collection methods and instruments.
3. Data Analysis: In both qualitative and quantitative analysis, the researcher should disaggregate data, explore intersectionality, discuss data trends with appropriate context, beware of implicit bias, and involve the community, where possible, in data interpretation.
4. Dissemination: The researcher should include the community as one of the multiple primary audiences of research findings, consider various formats for reporting findings, and prioritize actionable research findings that the community can use.

We understand that embedding a racial and ethnic equity perspective is an iterative, time-consuming process that will look different for each research study. It may not always be possible or feasible to fully incorporate a racial and ethnic equity perspective due to funding and time constraints and other parameters set by the funder; however, incorporating any of these elements into the research process is a step forward. We hope that researchers will use this guidance as a springboard to develop specific and unique ways to incorporate a racial and ethnic equity perspective in their work.

Finally, this is a work in progress, and we look forward to revising as we learn more from our own work and the work of research colleagues across the country.

Introduction

Racial and ethnic disparities are evident across a wide range of child and youth indicators.[1] The reasons are complex and involve gaps in health, education, wealth, and employment that stem from the historical legacy of many institutions, events, and social and legal structures. These root factors include slavery, Jim Crow laws, American Indian genocide, anti-immigrant policies and sentiments, the Zoot Suit Riots, the Chinese Exclusion Act, internment of Japanese Americans, endorsement of the model minority myth, and structural racism. More than 150 years since slavery ended and more than 50 years after the Civil Rights Act became law, racial or ethnic identity still plays a role in defining a person's life course. Federal laws and policies forbid discrimination based on race and ethnicity; however, institutional policies and practices and social norms that perpetuate existing inequities, in both overt and covert ways, have institutionalized bias and racism. Communities of color have been historically disadvantaged by these systemic and structural barriers, which shape the experiences and life trajectories of children, youth, and families.

In an increasingly diverse society, the persistent issues seen among racial or ethnic minorities partly reflect the fact that mainstream, majority perspectives have also shaped the research that has informed decision making about such issues. Research should not perpetuate disparities, inequalities, and stereotypes about populations of color. Researchers who analyze data, evaluate programs, measure outcomes, and make recommendations for program and systems

Terminology

Communities of color: Families or children other than those who are Non-Hispanic white-only (e.g., Black, Hispanic, American Indians and Alaska Natives [AI/ANs]).

Community: A place where people reside and interact, or a larger system that people are a part of (e.g., youth in foster care). We consider the members of a community to have similar characteristics, experiences, or interests.

Disparities: The unequal outcomes of one racial or ethnic group as compared to outcomes for another racial/ethnic group.

Disproportionality: The underrepresentation or overrepresentation of a racial or ethnic group compared to its percentage in the total population

Racial and ethnic equity: Racial or ethnic identity no longer predicts life outcomes.

Racial and ethnic equity perspective: An approach to research and evaluation that adapts the research process by applying tools and practices needed to recognize people of color's experiences with unequal power differentials and access to resources and opportunity, while considering historical and current lived realities, including structural racism.

Structural racism: A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It includes dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with "whiteness" and disadvantages associated with "color" to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist.

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[1] Children of color are more likely to die as infants and to begin school academically behind their white peers. In 2016, the infant mortality rate, per 1,000 live births, was 11.1 for black babies, 8.0 for American Indian babies, and 5.2 for Hispanic/Latino babies, compared to 4.8 for white babies. Minority youth are overrepresented in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, as are minority adults in prison. More minority individuals live in poverty—one in four blacks, one in four Native Americans, and one in five Hispanics/Latinos are classified as poor.
Kids Count Data Center. Infant mortality by race in the United States. *Annie E. Casey Foundation.* Retrieved from https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/tables/21-infant-mortality-by-race#detailed/1/any/false/870,573,869,36,868,867,133,38,35,18/10,11,9,12,1,13/285,284

improvement therefore have a responsibility to embed a racial and ethnic equity perspective in their work. To do so, researchers must think critically about how they collect, analyze, and present data to avoid masking disproportionalities or disparities that different racial and ethnic groups experience. They must pay disciplined attention to race and ethnicity while analyzing problems, looking for solutions, and defining success.

Traditional approaches to research and evaluation do not consistently reflect such attention to racial and ethnic inequities. Some researchers are trained on concepts such as cultural context, cultural responsiveness, cultural competence, and cultural sensitivity. However, they may apply these concepts of "culture" in limited ways—to describe differences in style, preference, and behavior—without accounting for fundamental differences in how people experience social life, evaluate information, decide what is true, attribute causes to social phenomena, and understand their place in the world. A person's racial and ethnic identity, and that person's experiences with inequities related to their race and ethnicity, encompass this broader understanding of culture. To account for these experiences, researchers should do more than highlight racial or ethnic differences when they examine research outcomes. Researchers also need the knowledge and tools to use a racial and ethnic equity perspective so that they can think critically about how data explains, contradicts, or perpetuates the experiences of communities of color.

Many of the practices outlined in this report are similar to those used in community-based participatory research (CBPR). CBPR is a useful approach for promoting racial and ethnic equity; in particular, it is useful for collecting data and involving a community as an equal partner in research. While a racial and ethnic equity perspective encompasses the CBPR approach, it also goes beyond this approach, when possible, to explore root or systemic causes of disparities, explicitly focusing on race and ethnicity. Like CBPR, research that incorporates a racial and ethnic equity perspective is concerned with equitable processes, but it also strives to promote equitable outcomes.

What is equity?

Equity is just and fair inclusion. Equity is achieved by environments, systems, and policies that support equal access to opportunity.[2]

What is racial and ethnic equity?

Racial and ethnic equity is both an outcome and a process. As an outcome, racial and ethnic equity is achieved when race or ethnic identity no longer predicts the course of a person's life, and all people have what they need to thrive, no matter where they live.[3] As a process, racial equity is applied when those most impacted by structural racial inequity are meaningfully involved in the creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact their lives.[4]

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[2] Braveman, P., Arkin, E., Orleans, T., Proctor, D., & Plough, A. (2017, May 1). What is Health Equity? [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2017/05/what-is-health-equity-.html
[3] What Is Racial Equity? (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/our-work/what-is-racial-equity/
[4] Ibid.

What is racial and ethnic equity in research?

Racial and ethnic equity in research means applying tools and practices needed to recognize people of color's experiences with unequal power differentials and access to resources and opportunity, while considering historical and current lived realities, including structural racism.

Why is a racial and ethnic equity perspective important?

Conducting research with a racial and ethnic equity perspective produces findings that more accurately reflect or incorporate the life experiences of children and youth of color. This research, in turn, provides policy and decision makers with information that helps them understand and address the underlying structural factors that perpetuate inequity.

What is the role of the researcher in advancing racial and ethnic equity?

Based on our interviews with researchers whose work examines racial disparities, cultural sensitivity, cultural responsiveness, racial and ethnic equity, and related issues, as well as our own expertise as researchers, we identified ways that researchers can contribute to racial and ethnic equity:

1. **Identify the underlying factors that contribute to the existence and maintenance of disparities**. Researchers provide credible data on relevant topics as well as informed solutions to equip policymakers and others to make thoughtful and evidence-informed decisions.
2. **Serve as a bridge between communities of color and those who make decisions, such as policymakers**. Researchers can directly engage communities of color, elicit authentic stories of where inequities exist, and include community voices in the research process in ways that inform strategies, policies, and interventions.
3. **Help build better data systems.** For example, researchers can build community and program capacity to collect data by ensuring that data related to race and ethnicity, and indicators of diversity within racial and ethnic groups (e.g., country of origin, immigration status) are collected and entered consistently and accurately by programs.
4. **Advocate within their institutions to make changes at a system level.** For example, researchers can advocate to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of researchers, build the pipeline of scholars from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and institutionalize a racial and ethnic equity approach in their standard research processes (e.g., in Institutional Review Board (IRB) or peer review procedures).

Guiding Principles

Every research or evaluation project is unique in its approach. Each project seeks to answer a specific range of research questions; thus, there can be no universal prescriptive formula for how to embed a racial and equity perspective in research. However,

foundational principles can guide each research project to intentionally embed a racial and ethnic equity perspective. Based on 34 interviews with researchers, funders, academics, community practitioners, and policymakers; a thorough literature review; and the deep research experience and expertise of Child Trends scientists, we developed five guiding principles on how to use this approach in every phase of research (from designing the study to reporting findings). These principles are designed for researchers to apply as they consider how their personal biases affect the collection and interpretation of the data, commit to uncovering underlying causes of disparities, ensure that research gives back to communities of color, engage the community as partners, and guard against the mindset that white is the normative standard for outcomes.

While these principles can be applied to both quantitative and qualitative research, the guidance and examples here focus primarily on primary data collection and research conducted in communities, as opposed to, for example, secondary analysis of data and outcomes.

The five principles that guide our strategies for incorporating a racial and ethnic perspective in research are presented below.

1. Researchers should examine their own backgrounds and biases.

Researchers strive to be neutral and objective; nevertheless, they have our own biases, values, background, and experiences that affect the way they conduct research. Bias affects the decisions made throughout the research process, including who asks the research questions, which questions are asked, whose input on the research is sought, how the data are gathered, how findings are interpreted and communicated, and which audiences and methods are selected for dissemination. Researchers should examine their own racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, as well as their experiences (or lack of experiences) with racism and/or privilege, and consider how they influence the direction of research. Researchers should not assume that ensuring a racial and/or ethnic match between researcher and the population of study is sufficient to remove bias from a study; rather, they need to pay careful attention to all sources of bias in a study.

2. They should make a commitment to dig deeper into the data.

While recognizing differences in outcomes among racial and ethnic groups is a first step in identifying disparities, it does not address them. Addressing disparities requires researchers to move beyond simply documenting them: We must also identify the underlying systemic and contextual causes of disparities. This focus is especially critical for understanding outcomes in communities of color, where truths have historically been distorted or overlooked to perpetuate racist systems and beliefs. We should dig deeper to uncover whether data points to a legacy of racism or systemic inequities at the root of racial and ethnic differences in outcomes, rather than an intrinsic deficit of the population in question. To dig deeper into the data requires that we ask questions to uncover root causes of disparities, seek the involvement and perspectives of community stakeholders, and invest adequate time and money in designing and implementing the research. Following these practices is especially important for understanding the experiences and outcomes of American Indian (AI) and Alaska Native (AN) communities that have

historically been under-researched. Similarly, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander populations are often under sampled and are combined in research.[5]

3. Researchers should also recognize that the research process itself has an impact on communities, and that researchers have a role in ensuring that research benefits communities.

Historically, researchers have employed practices that resulted in the inhumane abuse and exploitation of communities and people of color. Researchers have obtained data on communities and then left without addressing the issues of the people they studied. By doing so, researchers have reinforced a paradigm in which they enter a community and conduct research without giving back[6]; in this way, they have added to the abuse and exploitation that vulnerable communities already face.

However, by embedding a racial and ethnic equity perspective, researchers can ensure that their work benefits the communities they study. For example, researchers can sometimes give back directly to a community by helping its people create a sustainability or capacity building plan. Moreover, they can partner with a community in the research process or share their findings with the community and study participants. Particularly in communities of color where there is a history of research that caused harm or mistrust, researchers should embed a racial and ethnic equity perspective to repair this relationship.

Ethical research must be reciprocal. The people who give researchers consent to use their data should receive something in return. For example, when conducting research with American Indian populations, researchers need to consider tribal sovereignty and data ownership. Researchers should strive to understand that when people of color give information, they can either feel honored or exploited in doing so; as such, researchers should recognize their contribution by giving back to these communities. Working to ensure a lack of harm means being transparent with communities, listening to their concerns, and identifying what people want in return.

Honoring a community also means acknowledging the often-overlooked power that communities of color hold. Research that incorporates a racial and ethnic equity perspective can help to reveal a community's power and dismantle power differentials that currently exist between researcher and communities of color.

4. Researchers should engage communities as partners in research and credit them for their contribution.

To incorporate a racial and ethnic equity perspective, researchers must authentically engage community stakeholders. The meaning given to data is influenced by who analyzes it. Community stakeholders—people who are experiencing the issue that researchers are

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[5] Tran, V. (2018, June 19). Asian Americans are falling through the cracks in data representation and social services [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/asian-americans-are-falling-through-cracks-data-representation-and-social-services

[6] Jones, K. and Okun, T. (2001). *The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture*. Retrieved from https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture-characteristics.html

interested in—can be engaged in the data analysis and offer a perspective that differs from that of researchers.

Researchers should genuinely work together with communities to accurately and effectively present information; this collaboration could include defining the issue of interest and brainstorming solutions to address it. Community-engaged research considers a community's culture, relationships, and policies. In this way, it is a mechanism for embedding a racial and ethnic equity perspective to research. Early community engagement is ideal and should continue through every stage of the research process. Community engagement is an acknowledgement of a community's contribution to the research and is important for promoting a true partnership.

5. Finally, they should guard against the implied or explicit assumption that white is the normative, standard, or default position.

Researchers typically make comparisons to white outcomes when they examine disparities. Such comparisons reflect the assumption that white outcomes are the standard, and that communities of color should aim to achieve that standard. These comparisons also apply positive values to cultural norms associated with whiteness and negatively measure people of color by those norms. Making comparisons to white people neglects the structural factors and root causes that may lead to disparities. For example, teen pregnancy rates among Hispanic and black youth are often compared negatively to the lower rates among white youth. In this comparison, a white upper-class standard— where teens pursue higher education, get married, and then have children—is considered the norm to which all populations should aspire. This assumption is particularly problematic because comparisons to white youth obscure the similar aspirations within these communities, blame the Hispanic and black teens' "poor choices," and neglect the structural factors and root causes that may lead to higher teen pregnancy rates.

A racial and ethnic equity approach moves beyond looking at disparities or "closing gaps" and shifts the focus to better outcomes for all while acknowledging that tailored solutions are necessary.

Stages of the research process

The five guiding principles inform all stages of the research process. The remainder of the report is organized in sections that mirror the stages of the research process. For each research stage, we offer key questions for the researcher to consider in applying the principles to the research process. We highlight concrete steps in "Your Toolkit" pullout boxes. The four stages we use to explain how the guiding principles may be applied are as follows:

1. Landscape Assessment: Understand the historical and political context in which the research study will operate and provide opportunities for stakeholders to share their perceptions of the apparent issue or topic.

2. Design and Data Collection: Carefully choose a study design and data collection methods that promote equitable outcomes.
3. Data Analysis: Orient qualitative and quantitative data analysis toward uncovering root causes.
4. Dissemination: Devise a comprehensive dissemination strategy that considers the language used, stakeholders as the key audience, and actionable results.

Landscape Assessment

Research and evaluation projects require a significant amount of preparation work prior to data collection, which includes assessing the context in which the project will operate. This section will discuss how to understand the context, clarify the issue or concern, and identify root causes.

Know the context

Before the research study begins, the researcher should understand the context in which the community operates. This requires the researcher to carefully examine the history and values of the community, and the culture, neighborhood, and people that may be involved in the study. Specifically, the researcher should conduct environmental scans (gathering information about a community and their relationships) to understand the systems and institutions in place that affect how people behave, and the landscape in which the community operates. This information is needed to determine the proper way to address issues and the preferred method of inquiry. Environmental scans examine the political context and current policies that further contribute to systemic racism and discrimination in these communities. In instances where environmental scans are not feasible, researchers should pay attention to policies and current political climates that have tangible effects on the populations involved in the study.

Questions to ask yourself

- Who is affected—positively or negatively—by the issue you plan to study? Why? How?
- How is power distributed in the community? What power differentials exist within the community? (For example, are elders treated as gatekeepers or final authority?)
- Which relationships are prioritized? Which relationships are discouraged? (For example, how is the relationship between the community and law enforcement?)
- How does the community like to be approached and what is the appropriate gateway? (For example, are there key community leaders who need to "give their blessing" for others to agree to engage?)
- How do you refer to individuals in your setting?
- What are the historical and cultural antecedents of the community? (For example, what is the history of racial dynamics in the community?)

Researchers should have a sense of the history and politics of the area. They should understand who has been marginalized, how they have been marginalized and by whom; they should also identify the factors that impede change (see Guiding Principles 2 and 4).

While environmental analyses provide invaluable information, researchers should go further to try to fill gaps in their understanding of the context by speaking with people in the community. Community members should be viewed as partners during the early stages of assessing the community's context because they can provide instrumental

insight about the community's perceptions of a topic, and how the researcher should broach discussing the topic in the community (see Guiding Principle 4). By speaking to community members, the researcher works in a concerted effort with the community to identify an issue and gauge the community's perspectives about whether that issue exists.

When engaging community members, researchers need to determine whether the community has agreed to participate in the research. Inherently, researchers, funders, or research sponsors hold a higher position of power than community members because they can influence study participants' behavior and responses to research questions, and they control how the data is used and interpreted. Given this power difference, it is important that researchers commit to ensuring study participants are treated equitably and respectfully (See IRB discussion in Conclusion). It is also important for the researcher to have conversations with the research sponsor or funder to understand how they want the data used and interpreted. In these conversations, researchers should advocate for participants' rights to have agency in how the data is used and interpreted. A central goal for researchers and evaluators is to ensure that a project is accessible to various stakeholders, not just to those who hold power within the community. Knowing the context will allow researchers to use appropriate language in conversations with community members and better understand the attitudes and beliefs of the community; this understanding helps inform how the research is conducted and the interpretation of the findings.

Clarify the apparent issue or concern

Researchers can inadvertently sabotage a study by approaching it with a pre-determined agenda and failing to co-create knowledge and solutions with the community to address an apparent issue or concern. A funder has a perspective on outcomes of interest, and the researcher can consume volumes of research literature that identify proximal indicators and validated measures; however, if the community does not have a voice in defining what is normative and what is a concern, the research or evaluation findings will inevitably fall short. The way the researcher defines the issue should be appropriate to the community. It should not inadvertently stigmatize or stereotype by assuming that certain behavior, activities, or outcomes are an issue (see Guiding Principle 5). Efforts to highlight strengths and assets, without presuming deficits, are especially important in research that focuses on children and youth and involves a positive youth development framework that emphasizes such strengths and assets.

> **Questions to ask yourself**
>
> - How does the community view the issue or concern? Why?
> - What language does the community use to discuss the issue or concern?

To clarify the apparent issue or concern, the researcher should begin by collecting background data from the neighborhood or community and reviewing publicly available datasets, reports, or media accounts. Then the researcher should conduct key informant interviews, focus groups and community dialogues to gather stakeholders' perspectives about the issue. Participants in these discussions should include community and business leaders, potential beneficiaries, service providers, and locally elected officials.

In addition to these preliminary steps, the researcher should consider holding forums or providing opportunities for community members to share their feedback on the issue and whom it affects. For example, if the study focuses on homelessness, the researcher should gather publicly available housing and census data for the community, Additionally, the researcher should study local, state, and national laws and regulations about housing and homelessness—especially those related to homelessness and housing for families with low socioeconomic status—to understand how many residents are affected by homelessness. Importantly, the researcher should speak with individuals who are currently or were previously homeless, and to service providers for homeless individuals (e.g., homeless service centers, emergency shelters) to gather their perspectives on homelessness and housing. The researcher should consider conducting interviews with residents to discuss housing procurement, with local municipal leaders to understand housing policies and opportunities for homeless residents, and with city employees who work in housing and urban development agencies. Together, these steps will provide important contextual information about community, including the number of homeless residents, the current housing infrastructure and climate, availability of affordable housing, and ways housing discrimination is perpetuated or combatted for low-income residents. This information equips the researcher with knowledge about the issue that can be explored further in the research study.

Identify root causes

After identifying the issue and discussing it with community stakeholders, the researcher should begin to identify possible contributing *causal factors* (see Guiding Principle 2). Causal factors are the conditions that allow an issue to occur and persist. For the research team, identifying these enabling factors is the starting point for pivotal conversations about root causes of the issue. Importantly, causal factors are symptoms of the issue, although people often mistake these symptoms for the true cause of the issue. Once researchers identify causal factors, they can start digging deeper to uncover the systemic and societal root causes of the issue. Determining causal factors involves acquiring data from community stakeholders and environmental scans and mining it until potential root causes of the issue have been identified. A **root cause** is a factor that, when taken away, prevents an outcome from occurring, whereas a causal factor is one that contributes to the outcome. Removing a causal factor might improve the situation, but it will not necessarily keep the issue from occurring. Structural racism[7] is an example of a root cause.

When trying to understand root causes of an issue, researchers may find it useful to create a diagram, such as a root cause tree. Other examples include the 5 Whys template

> **Questions to ask yourself**
>
> - What are the causal factors and root causes of the issue?
> - How are your research questions informed by these root causes?
> - How do you explicitly communicate root causes that are beyond the research conducted?

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[7] The Responsible Consumer. (2017 April). Systemic, Structural and Institutional Racism. [Web log post]. Retrieved from https://theresponsibleconsumer.wordpress.com/systemic-implicit-microaggression-racism/

and the Fishbone Diagram.[8, 9, 10] To construct a root cause tree, first brainstorm possible causal factors (sometimes labeled possible root causes) for the issue or problem or interest by asking why it is occurring. Then, connect the factors in a logical cause-and-effect order to arrive at the root of the issue. Figure 1 shows a framework of a root cause tree.

Figure 1: Example of Root Cause Tree

Root Cause Analysis Tree Diagram
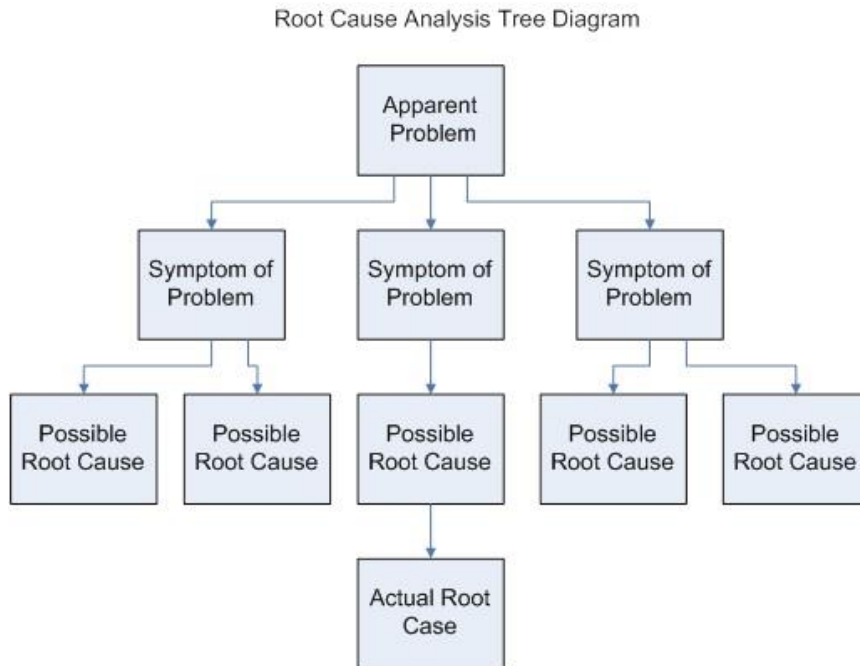
Source: Example of a root cause method. Reprinted [or adapted] from Wikipedia. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Root_cause_analysis#/media/File:Root_Cause_Analysis_Tree_Diagram.jpg .

When conducting a root cause analysis, the researcher should consider the following:

1. Several root causes may be linked to one causal factor, which indicates that correcting that root cause will have far-reaching effects.
2. Many root causes will be outside the researcher's sphere of influence. The researcher should identify and share such root causes with local authorities, policymakers, community stakeholders, and others with influence to affect them.

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[8] IntraHealth International, Inc. (2014 May). Conducting root cause analysis using the Why Tree (or Five Whys). Retrieved from https://www.intrahealth.org/opq/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Five-Whys-Technique.pdf
[9] Piute County School District. (n.d.). 5-Whys Guide & Template. Retrieved from https://www.piutek12.org/images/5_Whys_Worksheet.pdf
[10] American Society for Quality. (n.d.). Fishbone (Ishikawa) Diagram. Retrieved from https://asq.org/quality-resources/fishbone

The role of the researcher or evaluator is to conduct this exercise to gain a better understanding of root causes, historical factors, and systemic/institutional factors that affect the community with which they are partnering. Identifying root causes helps the researcher understand inequities that lead to an issue and inform the development of research and evaluation questions that address the appropriate issue. For example, in a project evaluating a teen pregnancy prevention program for males of color, the young men were asked not only what they thought about the program, but also what the biggest issues were for men of color; nearly all said discrimination. While the connection between discrimination and pregnancy prevention may not seem readily apparent, discrimination can affect toxic masculinity norms, which has been shown to affect unplanned pregnancy. In response to this finding of the research and evaluation project, the program developers added curriculum content focused specifically on discrimination. Conducting environmental analyses to determine the root causes of an issue is an iterative, time- and resource-intensive process. Furthermore, researchers must have transparent conversations about the time and resources required to account for these crucial steps, so they are completed successfully.

Your Toolkit

- Gather publicly available data about the site to understand the racial and ethnic groups in the community.

- Review legislation, policies, and other city documents related to the topic of interest and familiarize yourself with the key players and change agents in the community (e.g., such as local businesses, churches, community organizations, and politicians). These steps help you understand the power dynamics of the community and whose knowledge is privileged.

- Research the historical context and inaccuracies or misinformation in reporting that surround the population and location of the project.

- Conduct key informant interviews with members of the community from a variety of social locations and positions of power to understand cultural norms, commonly used language, and attitudes toward the issue of your study.

- Ensure that stakeholders know they are instrumental to the entire project from beginning to end. Continue working with stakeholders after the project ends through the dissemination of study findings to an array of audiences.

- Be reflective to ensure that you confront your own biases you hold about the population, community, or other factors that affect your study.

Design and Data Collection

This section will explore how to create research questions that incorporate a racial and ethnic perspective and how to design the research study; additionally, this section will discuss the value of diverse research teams, and the creation and testing of data collection instruments.

Develop equitable research questions.

The goal of working toward equitable outcomes (outcomes for all children and families regardless of race/ethnicity) should guide researchers in developing their research questions. Questions should intentionally focus on advancing racial and ethnic equity and/or minimizing harmful effects for communities of color. While some research is investigator initiated, other research answers questions that are predetermined by the funder. In these cases, embedding racial and ethnic equity can be difficult when a funder determines the research questions, especially when the project's goal, scope and questions are unrelated to equity. However, even with funder-determined research questions, the researcher has some agency, and can propose widening or altering the question to insert a racial and ethnic equity perspective. For example, the researcher can ask: What are the intended equitable end conditions in the community and how will they be measured?

Questions to ask yourself

- Are the community's values represented in the research questions?
- Have the researchers identified how the answers to the research questions will benefit the community?
- Do the research questions account for the cultural and historical context of the community?

The most equitable research questions are those that reflect the community's values and perspectives. It is also important to understand who assigns and determines values within each community, as these community dynamics will play a pivotal role in how research questions are developed. Communities are not homogenous, and researchers should be keenly aware of all community differences to be sure their research questions are reflective of that diversity. Additionally, since equitable research is reciprocal research, researchers should seek to "give back" to the study participants and the community (see Guiding Principle 3). The community's values, culture, historical context, and voice should inform the research design.

Research questions should acknowledge and consider cultural assumptions and norms, the community's history and context, and the reality of structural inequities. It is important for researchers to pay keen attention to how race, power, language, and privilege affect the community context, and determine how to craft research questions that account for these factors. Researchers might consider a participatory approach, in which the community actively engages in the research process. In this way, researchers can acquire a more complete and valid understanding of the program, service, or model they are studying and build accurate, respectful research questions that reflect the community perspectives. By engaging community representatives, researchers can also build trust and credibility that will help them learn about relationships and other contextual factors. This informed understanding will lead to research questions that can

better assess the impact of social investments and will produce more valid findings and better-tailored recommendations.

Determine the research design.

Gathering community input

Before establishing a study design, researchers should seek community input on the purposes, goals, and impacts that are relevant to them, and compare those to the research project goals. Input can be gathered in interviews with community leaders, focus groups with members of the community, open community meetings to discuss the project and proposed impacts, and from other researchers who have previously worked with the community.

Questions to ask yourself

- How much time will key stakeholders need to invest in your research project?
- How will you compensate key stakeholders for the time they have invested *in* your project?

One way to start gathering community input is by gaining an understanding of the program model or research question from the community's perspective. For example, researchers may re-work a previously designed logic model to better illustrate the program's activities and outcomes after hearing participants' stories and personal experiences, if the traditional linear model does not reflect the intersections and contexts identified. This collaboratively created logic model could further build buy-in from the community if, for example, community strengths and assets are included as inputs into the program. Similarly, a community may rework research questions in a way that more closely resembles the issue and its effect on outcomes for the community.

Community considerations

It is important for researchers to maintain the cultural rigor of the design by ensuring that the community respects and trusts the design and type(s) of data collected. For example, well-designed and well-executed randomized control trials (RCT)s are effective in determining the impacts of a program. For some RCTs implemented in communities, one group receives the program, and another does not. This design makes sense unless the community suffers disproportionately from social, health, and/or psychological issues. This issue explains why some community organizations and schools can be wary about participating in RCTs. For example, the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) will not allow randomized control trials to be conducted in schools unless a comparable control group program is offered to other students. A comparable control group program is another program of equal engagement and duration, but its participants do not receive the content delivered for the intervention group. The Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) acknowledges that there are several scenarios in which a traditional RCT (in which the control group does not receive the intervention and is assigned to a group by the researcher) may not be an appropriate option. Some alternatives approaches to traditional RCTs include Single Case Research Designs, Stepped Wedge Designs (all individuals will receive the intervention), Interrupted Time Series Designs, Kernel Matching/Optimization, Regression Discontinuity, Instrumental Variables, Hierarchical Bayesian Analysis, and Value-added Modeling. Using a design that works for the community is likely to gain more community buy-in and participation.

Both researchers and communities have needs and intentions regarding how collected data will be used. Community stakeholders can work with researchers to determine how to obtain answers, what questions are appropriate to ask (including the wording of the questions), and how answers to the research questions can benefit the community. With this input, researchers can revise the questions and data collection procedures. To explicitly integrate racial and ethnic equity in the research design, the researcher must consider the lived experiences of the population. For example, the researcher may consider whether program and data collection efforts occur at times when community members can participate or attend sessions. If the study population includes low-income participants who have multiple jobs, many of them may be unable to attend a parenting program that meets at 10 a.m. on a Friday; home visits would be more appropriate for these parents. Similarly, for a study design that includes interviews, researchers may need to travel to participants or conduct phone interviews instead of requiring people to travel to the study site.

Recruit study participants

Recruiting study participants can be challenging in communities of color where there is a history of previous research in which participants were abused or misrepresented, or in communities that have been targets of discrimination from the larger society. To mitigate such challenges, researchers should partner with the community or with organizations that serve, work with, or are part of the targeted population. Bringing members of the community into the research process can increase researchers' credibility and minimize barriers to participation in research.

Decide who will collect the data.

While a considerable body of research has examined the merits and challenges of matching field researchers' race with the population of study, less has been said about the value of a diverse rather than homogeneous research team. In a homogeneous team, members tend to gradually drift toward similar beliefs and styles of thinking. This concept, known as groupthink, can lead to less rational courses of action and a narrower range of options and opinions. In contrast, a racially diverse team of researchers, whose members differ in their lived experiences and cultural beliefs, can contribute multiple perspectives to the study design, process, and findings. To function well, a diverse team needs an environment in which staff are encouraged to apply their own life experiences and share their unique perspectives. When empowered to do so, team members can voice concerns about data collection and interpretation or provide insight on how best to engage or approach the community about the issue at hand. Members should be encouraged to challenge assumptions even when it appears that they hold similar beliefs. They should also be encouraged to push the research design to capture varying points of

> **Questions to ask yourself**
>
> - Do you have a diverse research team that can bring their perspectives into the entire construction of the entire research process?
> - Has your research team been trained to listen intently and collect credible evidence?
> - How will you address inherent power differentials and dynamics that arise in the research?
> - How will power differentials be addressed in agreements and contracts necessary for the study?

view and introduce interesting questions that stem from personal values or life experiences.

Where researchers' life experiences or other characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, language, dialect, gender, culture, class) differ from those of the population being engaged, the team should discuss how these differences may influence the research process and possibly reinforce a power differential (see Guiding Principle 1). Due to such differences, researchers may interpret data and research findings incorrectly; field staff may miss verbal or nonverbal cues (hand movements or tone of voice), misinterpret nuances of a culture (posture, dress, body language, or subtle differences in the meaning of words) or be influenced by their personal assumptions or biases (about a neighborhood or how someone dresses).

Identify data collection instruments.

To determine what measurement tools will be used to gather information, researchers should consider how information is shared in the community and whose information is prioritized. Understanding how communities provide and communicate information is important for data collection. For example, when collecting data in communities that prefer to communicate information with narrative and storytelling, researchers should include qualitative data collection.

Researchers should select the methodology that is best suited to answering their research question and that eliminates method or measurement biases. The advantages or disadvantages of a data collection method may depend on the population of interest. The only data collection method that is insufficient is one that does not accurately and truthfully capture data. One way for researchers to determine which data collection method and instruments are appropriate for their study is to ask prospective participants and community stakeholders.

The flexible and probing nature of qualitative research offers a few advantages. For example, people in some communities may prefer an in-person setting rather than communicating information via paper. Another advantage of qualitative research is that it allows researchers to explore historical and structural factors through narrative and gives participants time to respond and reflect on probes by interviewers in a way that quantitative measures may not. Qualitative research allows researchers and participants to engage in-depth to answer the questions of "why." The "why" is important because it gets to the root cause of the issue.

For all measures, even validated measures and tools, it is important to perform cognitive testing with the participants in the study. Cognitive testing examines how respondents interpret questions, items, and instructions on research instruments, allowing researchers to adapt their instruments to better capture the environment/people under consideration. Many measurement tools and scales were developed by non-minority researchers and tested in non-minority samples. While an instrument may be validated for use in non-minority populations, it may require further validation or testing in a specific population to ensure that its concepts, constructs, and questions are valid and reliable. If full psychometric testing of the instrument with specific population is not

immediately feasible, cognitive testing of concepts and questions is still advisable. A validated survey instrument may be efficient for addressing the research question in one community or population, but not in a different context. For example, the phrase *bien educado*, which means "well mannered" in Spanish, may result in confusion and misinformation if a speaker who uses the phrase, or a listener who hears it, assumes that it means "well educated." Failing to recognize this distinction in meaning can lead to inadequate conclusions and interpretations. For this reason, it is important to test the research question with the community to garner feedback on how they perceive the question, and their suggestions on how to obtain an answer.

Researchers often do not consider the validity or reliability of the measures selected and used for these under-researched populations, or they fail to consider how the internal and external validity of the research may be affected by using measures that originally were developed and normed on a different population. If the measurement plan does not ensure that measures of the target variables produce scores with equivalent meanings across race and ethnicity, income, or language groups, those measures may misrepresent observed relationships and causal relationships.

Your Toolkit

- Develop research questions that reflect the community's values and perspectives.

- Create research questions that consider the community's context by examining how race, language, power, and privilege shape structural inequities.

- Engage community stakeholders to understand what type(s) of data the community trusts.

- Determine how the community likes to receive data and ensure the data accurately reflects their preferences. Create racially and ethnically diverse research teams, and encourage them to incorporate multiple perspectives to be incorporated in the research.

- Train the research team to look for verbal and nonverbal cues, challenge personal assumptions and biases, and take note of behavioral or verbal nuances.

- Cognitively test instruments with your specific population.

Data Analysis

Researchers embed a racial and ethnic equity perspective in data analysis when they interpret and frame findings in ways that acknowledge and address the root causes, contextual factors, and social determinants of the data they observed. To do this,

researchers should *actively* strive to uncover root causes or social determinants (see Guiding Principle 2), develop acute awareness of their personal biases in doing so (see Guiding Principle 1), and include community stakeholders and representatives in the interpretation of their findings (see Guiding Principle 4). This section explores steps researchers can take in quantitative and qualitative analyses, including ways for community stakeholders to interpret results.

Quantitative data analysis

Disaggregate data

One common method researchers use to acknowledge race and ethnicity in research is to disaggregate data by race. Data disaggregation allows researchers to examine important variables by different racial and ethnic subgroups, and to carefully examine the distribution for important variables for the population with which they are working. Whenever possible, researchers should disaggregate by subgroups (by nativity, country of origin, citizenship status, etc.) to uncover the heterogeneity of experiences between and within racial and ethnic groups. In larger studies, disaggregation allows for some analyses by race, but unless the study has been designed from the start to include large samples of subgroups, disaggregation may not be possible. While data disaggregation is an invaluable tool to understand a topic or outcome by race or ethnicity, it can obscure racial and ethnic differences seen in populations that have great ethnic diversity. Data disaggregation often focuses on racial and ethnic groups with larger samples, often grouping AI/AN and Asian American/Pacific Islanders (APPI) populations into the "other" category. However, researchers should include caveats about making inferences about AAPI and AI/AN populations and suggest that future research include stratified sampling to ensure that their experiences are adequately captured. For studies of small populations, oversampling may help. For example, for AI/AN and AAPI populations, oversampling is critical for disaggregating data by race and producing meaningful results. Embedding a racial and ethnic equity perspective means providing the extra resources to oversample when needed.

Methods of data analysis and interpretation that simply note differences by race and ethnicity do not go far enough. Researchers must delve more deeply to learn more about those discrepancies. They must go beyond racial and/or ethnic group classification to look at structural and social determinants that might explain the observed findings. Some evaluators push for cross tabulations of the data, which allows an examination of two or more variables simultaneously to better understand patterns in the data. For example, a researcher can simultaneously examine income data by neighborhood and race/ethnic groups. Two additional ways researchers can analyze data more deeply are to 1) explore intersectionality of race with other dimensions of identity, and 2) ask why the trends that this analysis may reveal occur.

Explore other facets of identity

The first way to go deeper is to explore intersectionality of race with other dimensions of identity, as they apply to the research question. For example, researchers cannot assume that all people of the same race/ethnicity have the same experience. Thus, it is important to examine subgroups by additional factors, such as immigration or refugee status,

gender, neighborhood, income, position of power, or other facets of identity. The additional factors to be explored will depend upon the research question. Understanding dimensions of the population beyond their race or ethnicity may illuminate a researcher's interpretation of the findings.

Discuss trends in the data

The second way to move beyond disaggregating data by race and ethnicity is to ask why the trends in the data are occurring. It is important to support the presentation of data by race/ethnicity with information about structural factors. For example, when showing graduation rates by school, it may be equally important to show the financial resources provided to each school or the financial hardship faced by students' families. When data collection measures proactively address root causes, understanding why trends occur becomes easier. Moreover, by sharing findings about data trends with policymakers, researchers can better link the research and policy worlds together to close gaps. If analysis, interpretation, and decisions related to findings do not explicitly incorporate a racial and ethnic equity perspective, racial inequities are likely to be perpetuated. When applicable, it is important to make strong policy recommendations that are supported by data to address structural factors (e.g., segregation, access to services) and inequities at the root of the issue.

Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative research offers important perspectives and information not captured by quantitative research methods. Qualitative data allows for narrative and storytelling—two sources of information that quantitative data cannot use. Qualitative data can also be used to illuminate and complement quantitative findings.

As mentioned earlier, qualitative data incorporates a racial and ethnic equity perspective most effectively when qualitative measures explicitly ask about root issues. In one study example, quantitative data showed that many Hispanics were not using benefits that could help support their families and children, even when they were eligible. One qualitative study aimed to understand the experiences of low-income Mexican, Dominican, and African American mothers and their children receiving public assistance. By asking participants why they did not use public assistance, researchers uncovered misconceptions about the potential consequences of doing so (e.g., having to pay it back, their children having to serve in the military, exposing an undocumented family member to public authorities, etc.). This kind of information is useful for program planning because program staff can work to clear up misconceptions and provide families in need with resources that can help support them.

It is important to ask explicitly about what concerns communities face, and if relevant, what they think contributes to those issues. By asking explicit questions about structural issues and social determinants and probing for meaning behind societal constructs, researchers can apply an interpretation of racial and ethnic equity from the perspective of community members themselves. If the interview sample is large enough, responses should be filtered by themes to notice any differences by race, gender, power level, and other demographics. For focus group data, differences in themes can be separated

between focus groups where compositions vary. When developing themes, it is important to ensure that the themes present a variety of voices. Notice whose voices are being coded or categorized more than others, paying explicit attention to power differentials.

Implicit biases in data analysis (quantitative and qualitative)

Confronting biases and carefully examining *how* they may affect the research study are essential for incorporating a racial and ethnic perspective in research. Before researchers collect data from study participants, they need to confront their assumptions and implicit biases that influence how they conduct research, interpret data, and present and message findings (see Guiding Principle 1). Researchers should engage in self-reflection, ask themselves questions (e.g., Who or what makes them uncomfortable, and why? To whom do they give second chances, and why? Whom or what do they judge based on stereotypes?), and understand what situations trigger these biases. The Implicit Association Test, a useful tool for identifying implicit biases, is starting point for pivotal conversations the research team must have before they collect data.

Beyond primary research in communities, bias may also exist in secondary data, and it can be perpetuated if it is not recognized. For example, data sometimes reflect a greater likelihood of black families being reported for suspected child maltreatment. However, these data could reflect the bias of the reporters (e.g., teachers, police, health care professionals) rather than accurate reporting. In turn, predictive analytics based on these data could "predict" that black families are more likely than white or Hispanic families to be abusive or neglectful, and thus perpetuate biased policies that are deeply damaging to children and parents.

Community involvement in data interpretation

Researchers benefit from including communities in the interpretation of results (both quantitative and qualitative). Community involvement in data interpretation is helpful for three reasons. First, researchers are not "studying" a population. Rather, the goal of research that incorporates a racial and ethnic equity perspective is to be transparent, respectful, and reciprocal. Second, researchers should recognize what they do not know, and that the community's perspective, based on their lived experiences, may complement the researchers' knowledge and elucidate contextual factors that may influence interpretation of the data. Third, it is enlightening to get the community's reaction to findings and their interpretation of why the findings were observed. Though researchers can acknowledge the potential biases in data itself, the community's interpretation will likely illuminate root causes.

> **Questions to ask yourself**
>
> - How are community stakeholders interpreting the findings?
> - What questions are stakeholders asking about the data?
> - How do community stakeholders' interpretations differ from or align with researchers' questions?
>   - If discrepancies are observed, what accounts for them?
> - What do community stakeholders see as the next steps for dissemination of the data?

Researchers can facilitate workshops in which community members code, categorize the data, and develop themes, with researchers as partners who offer support. This activity can be brief, or it can be a long process. In one example, a Native researcher worked with a tribal community (not the researcher's own) and spent eight months examining each variable with the community advisory board. This process enabled the researcher to get the community's insights and perspectives and also gave the community the opportunity to truly get to know the data they helped generate. However, in other examples, sharing data with the community has been accomplished in a two-day workshop. Other creative ways (see Resources: Data Analysis) to involve community members in the interpretation of results include data parties, which may take the form of review panels, data dashboards, or data visual walk-throughs.

The analysis phase is also a good time for the researcher to re-confirm how and where the community wants the data presented. These decisions should be made prior to the beginning of the study, but there may be an adjustment in community preferences after the study produces findings.

Your Toolkit

- Explore intersectionality of race with other dimensions of identity that make sense for your research question.

- Ask why you see the trends that you do.

- Support the presentation of racial data with information about structural factors.

- Confront personal biases.

- Creatively include community stakeholders in interpretation of data.

Dissemination

The next stage of the research and evaluation process is disseminating findings to the proper audiences. Dissemination planning should begin when the project has been awarded funding. As part of dissemination planning, researchers should consider the target audience(s) for the data, how that data is messaged to stakeholders, the medium used to share data, and how the data will be used beyond the immediate project.

Audience

Research has several audiences, and importantly, they include the individuals or entities from which the researcher gathered information for the research topic. Researchers typically focus on other researchers as their primary audience, reflected in journal articles and academic conference presentations or posters. Researchers may also consider funders or clients as secondary audiences, and regard the population or community of study either as a tertiary audience or not an audience at all. Research participants may share intimate details of their lives and are often abandoned after the research project ends— left without knowing or understanding the findings of the research to which they contributed. This experience only fosters distrust between community members and researchers.

Instead, researchers should consider the population of study or community stakeholders as one of multiple primary audiences. Other research audiences may include community members, policymakers and program administrators, each with different preferences for how information is presented to them. The researcher should first identify the audiences, and then consider what information will be most useful for each one, and what format should be used to share that information. For example, a peer-reviewed publication or report brief may not be useful to community members. They may want information disseminated in the form of a town hall meeting, a data walk or data party, a gallery of pictures, or a community play. The researcher should also consider releasing the findings to the community first (ideally, they were engaged in a preliminary stage contributing insights before findings were finalized), and then to other audiences.

Messaging

Community members, stakeholders, and research participants should feel that they are the authors of their story and be empowered to share their stories through mediums that are most beneficial to them. These individuals should review findings before they are widely released so they can make recommendations about the language that should be used in reports, presentations for community members, and other mediums. This ensures that the findings do not attribute disparities in the data to individuals or groups involved in the study.

Terminology

Victim-blaming occurs when persistent differences are attributed to the attitudes, actions, and abilities of an individual or racial and/or ethnic group.

Researchers must consider the language they use to present findings, regardless of the audience, to ensure they do not victim-blame participants or groups in the study. To combat victim-blaming, researchers should provide contextual information that explains why certain phenomena are occurring within the data. To do this, the researcher must carefully consider the language used to discuss differential outcomes. For example, instead of saying, "Poor children are more likely to experience food insecurity," say "Children living in poverty are at greater risk of experiencing food insecurity."

Researchers should also acknowledge that perhaps others are better equipped to disseminate data to target audiences. In their research plans, they should factor in resources for community members to share their stories, the cost of a communication team, or the cost of consulting with an outside expert. Race Forward developed a Race Reporting Guide that provides information for journalists and thought leaders about how to report information that pertains to race, racism, and racial justice to large audiences. In addition, Native American Journalists Association has published resources for reporting about Indigenous populations. These are just two examples of helpful resources that researchers can consult to guide their messaging. (see Dissemination Resources in the Appendix).

Presentations

Presentations should explicitly describe how a racial and ethnic equity perspective was or was not applied to the research. That is, the presentation should describe how a root cause analysis led to the shaping of research questions and the concluding policy or system changes that were recommended. Researchers should be transparent about the extent to which the community was involved in the research design, data collection and interpretation, and dissemination strategies. They should explain the limitations of their use of a racial and ethnic equity perspective, when appropriate. Additionally, researchers should present trends, contexts, and systemic inequities that explain their findings. When researchers clearly describe how they considered racial and ethnic equity throughout their research and findings, and explain how this approach strengthened the validity and reception of the results, other researchers will be better informed about how they can take a similar approach.

Medium

The researcher should consider the best medium and time to share research findings with community stakeholders and participants. The medium used to disseminate the findings should take the needs of the community into account. Researchers could consider providing in-person presentations at community events, data walks/talks/parties; prepare infographics to display in community buildings or centers; speak at health fairs and forums; and meet with reporters from local news television and radio stations. It is important to discuss these venues as options with community members to learn what would have the most appeal. These mediums can be effective in reaching members of the community more readily because they are accessible; in these mediums, the researcher can use language that is clear, plain, and to-the-point.

By applying a racial and ethnic equity perspective in the research process, the researcher can create ways for participants and community stakeholders to have equitable access to the data that has been collected and space to make their own interpretations of the findings. For example, when collecting data on adolescents' after school activities, consider hosting a data party with participants, the community members, and other invested stakeholders so they can engage and discuss the data. These parties allow participants and community stakeholders to discuss patterns within the data, the implications of the data, and what changes can be made in their community. It is important to be timely in sharing findings with community stakeholders and participants. Ideally,

either preliminary or final findings can be shared less than a year after the completion of data collection.

Sustainability

As mentioned previously, root causes are underlying causes that perpetuate an outcome until removed. However, most root causes cannot be easily addressed or fixed. Therefore, researchers must sustain their engagement with policy makers and promote ongoing awareness efforts of findings so that interest does not wane when research activities have concluded. Dissemination planning should not end with the reporting of findings to key stakeholders. Rather, the final step in the research process is an ongoing one: ensuring that the community is able to act on the research recommendations.

In support of this goal, researchers should create recommendations with clear actions steps that consider cultural context and draw on community values; these recommendations are the most effective way to ensure that the findings will be applied. To the extent possible, research findings should guide stakeholders in developing concrete action plans, so they use the information and implement any recommendations (leading to program improvement or program effectiveness, for example). In this way, the stakeholders who are most affected by the results and findings of the study are supported in finding solutions to problems that have been identified.

Notably, the dissemination plan should also consider how researchers can ensure that their research reaches politicians, local public officials and community leaders, and other changemakers who can support programs and policies that are demonstrating change. Additionally, researchers can ensure that communities benefit from their study by providing programs with language they can use in proposals they develop to apply for funds to support their program's operation. Finally, if the study involved a randomized control trial that demonstrated benefits to participants, researchers could recommend that control participants also receive the intervention once the study is over.

Your Toolkit

- Ensure that community stakeholders and participants are considered a primary audience.

- Consider the language that is used to message findings to your audience, especially community stakeholders and participants.

- Be sure to ask community stakeholders about their interpretation of the data findings. They can provide invaluable contextual information that better explains research findings.

- Determine the best method or platform to share your findings with your respective audiences. Ask community members and stakeholders about how they would like to consume the research findings.

- Provide recommendations or actionable items for community members that can be used for sustainability planning or finding solutions to the issues that have been identified.

Conclusion: Next Steps

Understanding how to incorporate a racial and ethnic equity perspective into research on children and youth is a work in progress. We hope that the guidance offered here—an initial and far-from-complete set of guiding principles, examples, and questions—will help researchers develop concrete steps for embedding a racial and ethnic equity perspective within their work. Researchers can use this guidance as a springboard for developing specific, thoughtful, and effective approaches in their own work. For child and youth research, there is no one set of "right" steps; instead, researchers have a moral and professional responsibility to ask key questions and engage in appropriate discussions with the research team and the communities affected by research. The ideas, information, and recommendations we provide focus primarily on research in communities and lean toward more qualitative or mixed-method studies. Further guidance is also needed to address the limitations and biases of conducting research with large administrative data sets, big data, or exclusively quantitative studies.

Embedding an equity perspective into research should start early—beginning with the development of a research proposal and budget. Importantly, this early planning should include conversations with funders about the research benefits of paying attention to racial and ethnic equity. Being proactive about the budget, and the cost implications of incorporating this approach, will also reinforce the importance of this work to the research team and enhance the likelihood for obtaining sufficient funds to do this work.

Accountability systems should also be in place at research centers and academic institutions to ensure that embedding a race and equity perspective is standard operating procedure. For example, an IRB application might require a section or checklist dedicated to racial and ethnic equity that acknowledges the ways in which these guiding principles have been discussed and describes the outcomes of that discussion. Internal and external peer review procedures should also explicitly include a review for these concerns. Once research teams have worked to embed a racial and ethnic equity perspective, the field can move toward defining best practices and challenges in this area.

Finally, fully addressing racial and ethnic inequities will require broader systems change. For example, funders should require applicants to explain how they will use this perspective in their research proposals. Academic institutions should train new researchers on the value and application of a racial and ethnic equity perspective. We hope that researchers, teachers, and funders understand the necessity of integrating racial and ethnic equity as a standard part of conducting high-quality research and work toward this goal.

This report is ongoing work and will be expanded as we continue to learn from and respond to the needs of the field.

Resources

Below are resources that focus on different aspects of the research process – ranging from designing a research study to disseminating findings.

Contextual Resources

These resources provide contextual information about race, the history of racism and racial dynamics in the United States, and how the dominant culture is used to oppress others.

Alexander, M. (2012). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness.* New York, NY: The New Press.

Anderson, C. (2017). *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide.* New York, NY: Bloomsbury.

Coates, T. (2015). *Between the World and Me.* New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau.

Freire, P. (1968). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York, NY: Continuum.

Greer, C. (2013). *Black Ethnics: Race, Immigration, and the Pursuit of the American Dream.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Isenberg, N. (2017). *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America.* London, UK: Penguin Books.

Katznelson, I. (2006). *When Affirmative Action Was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

Kenda, I. (2016). *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America.* New York, NY: Bold Type Book.

Moss, K. (2003). *The Color of Class: Poor Whites and the Paradox of Privilege.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Omi, M. & Winant, H. (1986). *Racial Formation in the United States.* London, UK: Routledge.

powell, j. (2008). Post-Racialism Or Targeted Universalism? *Denver University Law Review, 86,* 785-806.

powell, j., Heller, C., & Bundalli, F. (2011). *Systems Thinking and Race Workshop Summary.* Los Angeles, CA: Authors.

Rodríguez, C. (2000). *Changing Race: Latinos, the Census and the History of Ethnicity (Critical America).* New York, NY: NYU Press

Rothstein, R. (2017). *The Color of Law.* New, NY: Liveright.

Traub, A., Sullivan, L., Meschede, T., & Shapiro, T. (2017). *T He Asset Value of Whiteness: Understanding the Racial Wealth Gap.* (Research Report). Retrieved from Demos website: https://www.demos.org/publication/asset-value-whiteness-understanding-racial-wealth-gap

Winant, H. (2002). *The World is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy Since World War II.* New York, NY: Basic Books.

Resources on Cultural Responsiveness & Equity

These resources focus on operationalizing a culturally responsive and/or racial and ethnic equity approach in evaluation, the work place, and government.

Bernabei, E. (2017). *Racial Equity: Getting to Results*. New York, NY: Government Alliance on Race & Equity.

Dean-Coffey, J., Casey, J., & Caldwell, L. (2014). Raising the Bar – Integrating Cultural Competence and Equity: Equitable Evaluation. *The Foundation Review, 6*(2), 81-94. doi: 10.9707/1944-5660.1203

Frierson, H., Hood, S., & Gerunda, H. (2002). A Guide to Conducting Culturally Responsive Evaluations. In *The 2002 User-Friendly Handbook for Project Evaluation* (pp. 63–73). National Science Foundation: Division of Research, Evaluation and Communication. Retrieved from https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf02057/nsf02057.pdf

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Hopson, R., Kirkhart, K., & Bledsoe, K. (n.d.). Decolonizing evaluation in a developing world: Implications and cautions for equity-focused evaluations. In Evaluation for equitable development results (pp. 59–82). UNICEF. Retrieved from https://www.wcasa.org/file_open.php?id=877

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Landscape Assessment Resources

These resources illuminate how to conduct assessments of the landscape in which a project will operate.

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These resources focus on how to consider equity and culturally competency when designing research studies.

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Dissemination Resources

These resources focus on the careful considerations needed when reporting findings, engaging and centering the community in dissemination efforts, and the language used when discussing race, ethnicity, and disparities.

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