An Antiracist Research Framework: Principles, Challenges, and Recommendations for Dismantling Racism Through Research

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ABSTRACT   Researchers have been more successful at identifying racial and ethnic disparities than preventing and eliminating these disparities. Meeting the urgent need to increase equity requires a broad interdisciplinary paradigm shift to antiracist research. Antiracist research is an action-oriented paradigm that assumes that racism is maintained within institutions; seeks to dismantle racism using nonracist research methods; and requires that study findings are disseminated to, benefit, and empower the target population. The ultimate goal of antiracist research is to dismantle racism and achieve a just and equitable world. This paper defines antiracist research and explains how it can be used to dismantle the racism embedded in research practices. We offer a conceptual framework, including 10 foundational principles for understanding and practicing antiracist research. We also discuss challenges that antiracist researchers often encounter along the antiracist research lifecycle. We conclude by providing several practical recommendations for principal investigators, members of the research team, funders, and universities to consider as they conceptualize, implement, and evaluate their antiracist research activities. This article has the potential to help reduce inequities and disparities via an urgently needed paradigm shift in research.

KEYWORDS: racism, disparity, inequity, community-based participatory research, intersectionality

Imagine for a moment that society is an apartment building. Racism and white supremacy forced enslaved Black people to build this building on land stolen from Indigenous people. White people benefited from the building's construction, but Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) were trapped and harmed. This building remains standing due to enduring social inequalities that perpetuate white privilege

and power and relegate BIPOC to an inferior societal position. A history of racism and inequality is embedded both in the structure of this building, through its foundation and frame, and in inequalities in the building's individual units. Fancy penthouses with expansive rooms occupy the top story, where floor-to-ceiling windows let warm sunlight pool onto thick carpets; shiny stainless-steel refrigerators are filled with a rainbow of fresh fruits and vegetables. A few floors down, there are more modest apartments with smaller windows that let in less sunlight; although their walls have cracked paint and bathrooms have dripping faucets, these apartments are safe and comfortable. Then there are studio apartments that feel a little less safe and comfortable and, further down in the basement, there are single rooms without a kitchen or bathroom. Some lower level living spaces have water leaking from the ceiling, mold creeping up the walls, and cockroaches scuttling across the barren floors. Some of these apartments lack refrigerators, and the windows are cracked and so coated in grime that the inhabitants cannot see through them. There is asbestos in the insulation. The elevators and stairs used to reach the fancy top floors bypass these apartments, so the people at the top never see the squalor that many inhabitants are forced to live in. The lower floors are disproportionally inhabited by BIPOC individuals and are stratified based on characteristics such as skin tone, native language, education level, and income. We all live in this building, but depending upon what floor we live on, our lived experiences vary widely. Every apartment has a window but offers vastly different views. People living in the penthouses have the power and the means to create change, and indeed some of them engage in social justice activities in an attempt to renovate parts of the building. However, others think the building is pristine; they do not want to renegotiate power and privilege and see no need for change, so the building remains largely unchanged. People in other apartments, on lower floors, have a different view and are the people whose voices are often ignored but should influence and direct change.

Research is one tool that can amplify these voices, renovate this building, and support social work's pursuit to dismantle racism. However, racism remains embedded in many traditional research practices, and these practices must be remediated through antiracist research (Bowleg, 2021; Brown et al., 2019). Antiracist research can renovate some apartments by making microlevel changes to individual apartments (e.g., providing parenting interventions to enhance family functioning, implementing life skills curricula in schools to increase youth self-esteem and substance use refusal skills, or offering job training resources to community members). In addition, macrolevel changes can be made to structural components of the building (e.g., using research findings to educate and encourage policymakers to change educational policies to decrease the racial achievement gap, or reducing health care disparities by using research to educate health care providers). Both forms of change are difficult to achieve because antiracist researchers are trying to renovate and transform the building while they and everyone else continue to inhabit it.

This paper defines antiracist research and explains how it can be used to dismantle the racism embedded in social and behavioral scientists' research practices. We offer guidelines for antiracist research by articulating antiracist principles (see Table 1), identifying challenges to antiracist research, and providing practical recommendations for implementing antiracist research that has a goal of combating racism and promoting social justice.

Racism in the United States

Although racism at individual, institutional, and structural levels has persisted for centuries in the United States, a new civil rights movement championed by Black Lives Matter has motivated Americans of all racialized groups and ethnicities to be antiracist and to examine and change behaviors that contribute to racism, social injustice, inequities, and disparities (Lebron, 2017). Academia and other professional fields have increased efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI; e.g., diversity trainings, increased employment of BIPOC faculty, inclusive pedagogies), but intentional promotion of antiracist research has not yet been a part of these efforts (Cahalan et al., 2021).

Substantial evidence demonstrates that BIPOC individuals in the United States continue to experience a host of disparities and inequities (e.g., in health, education, housing, employment, and economics) that are fueled by racism, oppression, discrimination, and structural inequalities (e.g., T. T. Clark et al., 2013; Olshansky et al., 2012). Unfortunately, research funded by federal agencies (e.g., National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Justice, Department of Education) has been far more successful in identifying these disparities than in solving them, despite researchers' use of widely tested theoretical frameworks, rigorous research methods, evidence-based interventions, and cutting-edge data analysis techniques. An antiracist research framework is urgently needed to achieve the equity aspired to in, and beyond, academia, especially in social science research.

Antiracist researchers are committed to trying to fully understand racism and recognize that race is a social and political construct. Historically, research has primarily conceptualized race as a biological category without contextualizing the historical and contemporary factors that have created and maintained inequities for BIPOC (Smedley & Smedley, 2005). Biological conceptualization of race fuels racist beliefs that disparate outcomes for BIPOC are due to genetic differences and distracts from recognizing that structural racism is a far stronger cause of disparities than genetic factors (Matsui et al., 2020). Structural racism is also embedded in the conventional research process, informing not only what is studied, but how it is studied.

What is Antiracist Research?

Antiracist research aligns with the principles and practices of antiracism. Yet, it is our contention that most researchers in the United States do not practice antiracist research.

Table 1

Antiracist Research Framework Guiding Principles

Principle	Approach
1. Racism is embedded in structures, policies, and procedures that maintain the status quo.	Researchers must address racism at structural and policy levels. Potential targets for change include research team composition; journal peer review and publishing practices; grant review panels and processes; and funding agency priorities.
2. Antiracist research seeks to dismantle racism.	Scholars must use inclusive research methods that avoid replicating racial biases against BIPOC in the data they yield. Research should address how to intervene in or mitigate structural and policy factors that contribute to inequities. Potential targets for change include research processes (e.g., research questions, participant recruitment, measure selection, data collection processes, manuscript production, dissemination of findings).
3. Antiracist research centers BIPOC experiences.	Scholars must acknowledge structural racism's powerful role in shaping BIPOC people's outcomes and strive to empower BIPOC to identify and change the racist structures affecting them. Scholars must also recognize that the people studied are the experts in knowing their own experiences and needs.
4. A marginalized racial identity often intersects with other marginalized identities.	Researchers must recognize how marginalized identities based on racialized group, ethnicity, social class, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, and other attributes intersect and privilege or disadvantage their target populations in different contexts.
5. Antiracist research foregrounds the importance of self-knowledge.	Researchers must acknowledge their own positionality (e.g., unearned benefits that come from white privilege, high socioeconomic class, heterosexuality, maleness, citizenship, ability, religion, and other attributes) in relation to the groups they study and society as a whole. Researchers must be aware of the limitations of their own perspectives and embrace diverse teams that include individuals with differing perspectives.
6. Antiracist researchers practice what they preach.	Researchers' personal actions should be consistent with their antiracist work. Potential targets for change include making microlevel changes in one's own life; actively using one's influence to transform racist systems, policies, and procedures; spending time in the communities where research takes place; and using research findings to create and support policies that give BIPOC communities access to needed services.
7. Antiracist research involves scientific empowerment, not scientific colonization.	The primary aim of research should be to improve marginalized people's lives, not to enrich the researchers' lives and research. Researchers must engage in research with populations that they appreciate and value; they should not take more from a population than they contribute or exclude the target population from the research process.

Table 1 (*continued*)

Principle	Approach
8. Antiracist researchers prioritize community engagement of the target population.	Research should be conducted collaboratively with communities. Researchers should strive to become integrated into the communities they study by learning about the communities' histories and helping community members organize and advocate for needed change.
9. Antiracist research uses team science to benefit from diverse perspectives.	Social work scholars should create interdisciplinary teams and seek out opportunities to be members of interdisciplinary teams while bringing their antiracist research perspective to the team.
10. Antiracist research is concerned with sharing findings with those who support and oppose liberation, social justice, and reduced inequity.	Researchers must ensure that study findings are appropriately interpreted, applied, and disseminated. The meaning and utility of study findings should be evident to all stakeholders, and all should be able to access findings. An opportunity for change is including members of the target community on the research team.

Note. BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Antiracism is an intentional process of identifying and challenging racism by dismantling systems, structures, policies, practices, and attitudes to ensure that resources and power are equitable (Kendi, 2019). Antiracist research necessarily requires maintaining a critical awareness of and counteracting the racist practices embedded in all aspects of the research process. It prioritizes research that disrupts patterns of oppression, incorporates the voices of marginalized and oppressed groups (Herrenkohl et al., 2020), and recognizes and attends to structural racism in the research process (Matsui et al., 2020). By reframing components of the research process and accepting new foundational assumptions (presented in this paper), antiracist research promotes more equitable knowledge production that centers both the individual's specific lived context and the impact of racism on their lived experiences. "Antiracist research assumes racism is maintained within institutions, seeks to dismantle racism using nonracist research methods, and requires that study findings are disseminated to, benefit, and empower the target population" (Goings, 2020). In this regard, antiracist research embodies ideals that are central to the profession of social work. Social workers—whose profession calls on them to use research and promote social justice—are well situated to pioneer the implementation of antiracist research.

To practice antiracist research, scholars must center race and racism. We operationalize *centering race and racism* as acknowledging systemic racism and actively working against structural or institutional racism given its impact on the research

enterprise. Antiracist research also acknowledges race as a social construct, addresses power imbalances, rethinks research questions and how they might perpetuate stereotypes, intentionally considers race and racism at each step in the research process (e.g., design, data analysis), and highlights the intersectionality of race with other identities while not minimizing the impact of race. BIPOC researchers are disadvantaged by racism every day, and many automatically and unconsciously center race in their research. White researchers, however, have the privilege of ignoring race and racism and must consciously decide to center race and racism at each juncture of the research process. To practice antiracist research, it is imperative that white researchers examine their own white privilege and fragility, commit to centering race and racism in their research, and work to acknowledge and combat their own racism.

Antiracist research employs interdisciplinary teams (Hall, 2018), mixed research methodologies (Mertens, 2007), and community-engagement principles to understand, explain, and address problems resulting from racial inequity and injustice (Israel et al., 1998). It also prioritizes improvements in the lives of BIPOC. In this sense, antiracist research overlaps with other research approaches that empower and benefit target populations. However, antiracist research expands other approaches by centralizing the social construction of race as an encompassing input and outcome (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). For instance, culturally competent research enables effective work in cross-cultural situations (Office of Minority Heath, 2000) by addressing social and cultural influences on beliefs and behaviors. *Culturally competent research* considers the culture and the context of the participants in all phases of the research (e.g., a researcher's beliefs about study participants and expressions of this awareness in the design, conduct, and interpretation of research; Office of Minority Health, 2000). Antiracist research builds on culturally competent research by expanding its focus to include the systems and procedures associated with the research process that perpetuate racial inequities in knowledge production and the communities impacted by that knowledge.

Beyond cultural competency, antiracist research draws on tenets from other research praxes, including culturally humble research. *Culturally humble research* requires cultural humility from the researcher and begins with an examination of the researcher's own cultural beliefs and identities and how they may shape the biases, assumptions, and values that the researcher brings to their work (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013). The culturally humble researcher is aware of their perspectives, limitations, and privileges throughout the research process and relies heavily on the lived experiences and expertise of people affected by the research question when developing solutions. In this way, the lifelong self-reflective work of practicing cultural humility is a promising method for researchers to begin to learn about cultures that are not their own. Antiracist research also has a natural synergy with *community-based participatory research* (CBPR), in which researchers and community stakeholders engage as equal partners in all steps of the research process (e.g.,

conceptualizing research questions, selecting methods) to educate, improve practice, or create social change (Israel et al., 1998). CBPR is particularly valuable when conducting research with populations that have historical and contemporary experiences with racism because it gives voice and power to these marginalized groups. Like antiracist research, CBPR aims to help improve communities and bring about social change.

Antiracist research requires both cultural competence and humility among researchers, and equity between researchers and community stakeholders, as seen with CBPR. However, antiracist research extends beyond CBPR, cultural competence, and culturally humble research to center the social construction of race and how racism has rendered historical and contemporary negative influences on the well-being of BIPOC in the United States. For example, although CBPR strongly aligns with antiracism research and provides an ideal pathway for the antiracist researcher, CBPR does not explicitly centralize race as a unit of identity. In CBPR, the community is the unit of identity, and that community can be characterized by race, geographical neighborhood, and other demographics. However, CBPR fails to fully acknowledge the unique role of racism in creating BIPOC identity and experience. Indeed, the centering of racism makes antiracism distinct from other research approaches and requires intense commitment to consciously and consistently focus on this centering. Antiracist research also aligns with critical race theory as a framework for understanding and addressing the role of structural and institutional racism while emphasizing the importance of BIPOC individuals voicing their experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Antiracist Research Framework: 10 Guiding Principles

1.   Racism is Embedded in Structures and Policies That Maintain the Status Quo

The goal of antiracist research is to dismantle the structures and policies in which racism is embedded and, in turn, to support individuals in addressing the issues they personally face. Addressing racism at structural and policy levels is essential to sustaining the individual-level benefits produced through antiracist research and practice. To return to our allegory of society as an apartment building, antiracist researchers are working to improve living conditions in individual apartments, but to ensure that these apartments do not again fall into disrepair, they must also address the larger structural flaws in the building's foundation and frame. Again, because everyone lives in the building, we must renovate it while we all live in it; that is, we must create systematic change while we are part of a racist system. The process is gradual, but it speeds up when researchers choose to engage in antiracist research. By committing themselves to antiracist research, social work scholars and researchers from other disciplines can play a vital role in speeding up the renovation process.

An antiracist researcher recognizes their complicity in perpetuating racism through their actions or inactions that maintain the status quo in research. For example, racism is often evident in the composition of a research team. We are drawn to people who are similar to us (Stangor, et al., 2014), and research teams tend to be comprised of similar people who know and like each other (Asmal et al., 2022). Many research teams are closed to new collaborators and BIPOC researchers because they are not part of the lead investigator's circle. As a result, BIPOC individuals are underrepresented on research teams (Chaudhary & Berhe, 2020). Research teams also exclude BIPOC investigators due to team members' implicit bias about the lack of expertise among BIPOC researchers (Asmal et al., 2022). Some investigative teams study Black and Brown people with no Black and Brown research team members, especially in leadership positions (e.g., McFarling, 2021).

Racism also affects which constructs journal and grant reviewers deem worthy of study or publication. Concepts that are unique or more meaningful to certain BIPOC (e.g., Afrocentric values, fictive kin, respeto, quietness, communalism, and familism) are not always understood by researchers who are not BIPOC and who consequently may not recognize their importance for future study (e.g., a study of Afrocentric values and mental health outcomes among people of African descent may not be well received by a panel that does not know Afrocentrism; Belgrave & Allison, 2018). This means that research focused on those concepts may go unfunded or unpublished, further limiting the critical attention these underexplored concepts receive and, in turn, foreclosing the potential benefits this research may have had for BIPOC communities. This chain of consequences powerfully illustrates the importance of addressing racism at structural and policy levels to effectively promote positive outcomes at the individual level. Finally, racism is embedded in funding agencies' narrow views of valid research methods (e.g., double-blinded clinical trials) and who has the credentials to study a topic (e.g., an endowed professor with a record of federal research funding). This narrow view limits innovative research methods (e.g., Photovoice) and does not acknowledge that researchers in academia are disproportionally white and male (Belgrave et al., 2019).

2. Antiracist Research Seeks to Dismantle Racism

The ultimate goal of antiracist research is an equitable society: a building in which every apartment is desirable to live in. However, as noted earlier, achieving equity is not solely a matter of improving individuals' lives, but a matter of broad structural and policy reform. To this end, antiracist researchers combat structural racism through inclusive research methods that avoid replicating racial biases against BIPOC in the data they yield. By freshly reconceptualizing traditional research processes (e.g., research questions, participant recruitment, measure selection, data collection processes, manuscript production, dissemination of findings), antiracist researchers will be able to ask and answer research questions that support BIPOC communities

and use study findings to advocate for changes in racist structures and policies. In addition, BIPOC community members should be involved as equal partners in the research process in order to increase community power and enhance the BIPOC voice.

Antiracist research can also dismantle racism through research that addresses how to intervene in or mitigate structural and policy factors that contribute to inequities. For example, research has shown that mentholated cigarettes account for huge disparities in tobacco-related deaths for African American adults (Food and Drug Administration, 2013; Levy et al., 2011). Policies that limit selling and marketing mentholated cigarettes have resulted in reductions in use and mortality among African American people (Rogers et al., 2021). This research on mentholated cigarettes led the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to recently ban mentholated cigarettes. Unfortunately, this policy has been met with massive resistance and court battles from the tobacco industry (Foley, 2021). This example conveys one of the ways in which research can mitigate racism through a policy change.

3.   Antiracist Research Centers BIPOC Experiences

Merely including BIPOC populations in research does not constitute antiracist research. Antiracist research actively centers BIPOC' experiences and the sociohistorical development of inequities (Doucet, 2021). This research acknowledges structural racism's powerful role in shaping BIPOC people's outcomes and strives to empower BIPOC to identify and change the racist structures affecting them. An early study by Belgrave (1994) illustrates the importance of centering experiences of the target population. Early in the HIV epidemic—before universal health care and wraparound services for people with HIV—Belgrave was interested in how Black women with HIV coped with depression and anxiety. However, the first few interviews yielded that women's predominant concerns were their children's well-being and meeting day-to-day needs, as many did not have systems in place for food, shelter, and childcare if they became sick. These women experienced inequities in housing, food security, and safety, in part due to systematic racism. Belgrave revised study questions and other aspects of the research protocol (e.g., including referrals for childcare and housing) to reflect the experiences of these women and how these experiences could inform interventions. Antiracist research assumes that the people studied are the experts in knowing their own experiences and what they need.

4.   A Marginalized Racial Identity Often Intersects
With Other Marginalized Identities

Crenshaw (1989) coined the term *intersectionality* to describe the overlap and interaction of human identity categories such as race, ethnicity, social class, and gender. The antiracist researcher must recognize how intersectional identities—not only race—privilege or disadvantage their target populations in different contexts. Let us say that in our allegorical apartment building the elevator tends to break down

more often in the part of the building with faulty wiring, where primarily BIPOC people live. A BIPOC person with a physical mobility disability would be doubly disadvantaged to live in this building, as they are more likely to live in a part of the building that is in worse condition and would have inconsistent access to a necessary service. At the same time, there is clear opportunity for advocacy and change based on a natural alliance between BIPOC residents and residents with a physical mobility disability, all of whom would benefit from improved conditions in the building, including an elevator that works on all floors.

In the example of Black women with HIV, study participants identified as a racial minority and a person living with HIV. In the United States, HIV infection rates are significantly higher among Black women than women in other racialized and ethnic groups (Ojikutu, 2021). Moreover, the experience of being HIV positive differs for women than men and for Black women than women of other racialized and ethnic groups due to a variety of institutional and structural factors (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Antiracist research recognizes that most people, including BIPOC, have intersectional identities that should be considered in research protocols. For example, research on Latinx immigrants should consider the intersectionality of being Latinx and an immigrant and assume that trust in government-sponsored research may be problematic due to racist propaganda targeting immigrants from some countries and should thus implement protocols that address the lack of trust.

5. Antiracist Research Foregrounds the Importance of Self-Knowledge

An antiracist researcher acknowledges their own positionality (e.g., unearned benefits that come from white privilege, high socioeconomic class, heterosexuality, maleness, citizenship status, being able-bodied) in relation to the groups they study and society as a whole. This awareness of the limitations of any individual background or perspective is a key reason why antiracist research posits that problem-solving requires several types of experts and team-science approaches. In this way, antiracist research is akin to culturally humble research (Yeager & Bauer-Wu, 2013), in which the researcher is aware of their own limited perspectives and learns from the target population.

6. Antiracist Researchers Practice What They Preach

The personal actions and decisions of a researcher should be consistent with their antiracist work (Semaj, 1996). This is also in line with how social workers should engage in antiracist social work practice and research and conduct themselves in an antiracist way outside of the practice and research realms. This principle is particularly pertinent for white researchers, who should examine their white privilege and fragility and their own racism. The researcher should therefore not give presentations on social justice advocacy, for example, while engaging in racist and unethical behaviors

and research practices. For example, when conducting research on ending health disparities, the researcher should not engage in practices that contribute to health inequities. Conducting research from the comfort of a penthouse does not solve the problem of racism. Leaving your penthouse to spend more time in other parts of the building (e.g., spending time in the communities where your research takes place), striving to make needed repairs throughout the building (e.g., making microlevel changes such as implementing after-school programs), and requiring that the elevator be accessible from all floors (e.g., using research findings to create and support policies that give BIPOC communities access to needed services) embody the notion of practicing what you preach.

7. Antiracist Research Involves Scientific Empowerment, Not Scientific Colonization

Antiracist research is conducted to improve marginalized people's lives rather than only to advance one's career or satisfy one's research interests. On the contrary, *scientific colonization* occurs when research findings do not improve individual lives, the community, or infrastructure (de Vos, 2020; Semaj, 1996). The antiracist researcher engages in research with populations that they appreciate and value; they do not take more from a population than they contribute or exclude the target population from the research process. Moreover, researchers should avoid becoming engaged in antiracism issues only when the topic is trending. Instead, researchers should commit to antiracism for the long haul. Further, antiracist research uses a strengths-based approach to empower the people being studied; it does not stigmatize and justify the oppression of BIPOC people. For example, some authors have criticized the structure of Black families and indicated that it contributes to poorer outcomes for children while failing to acknowledge that the Black family structure is flexible, strong, and meets the family's needs (Belgrave et al., 2022).

8. Antiracist Researchers Prioritize Community Engagement of the Target Population

Antiracist research is conducted collaboratively with communities, not on communities. Engaging the BIPOC communities among whom the research is conducted is a prerequisite for conducting effective antiracist research. These communities may be defined by geographic boundaries and/or by shared heritage, values, and a sense of belongingness. Researchers should spend time in communities of color getting to know residents and identifying needs with residents, thereby creating a collaborative research culture (Campbell et al., 2021; Salimi et al., 2012). Antiracist researchers strive to become integrated into the communities they study by learning about the communities' histories and helping community members to organize and advocate for needed change. For this reason, antiracist research requires meaningful community engagement (Doucet, 2021). Community engagement goes beyond

activity in the community to working collaboratively with the community (Salimi et al., 2012). Community engagement provides in-depth insights into the factors and outcomes associated with racial inequity through consistent dialogue and building a community's local capacity to address its salient needs. Even more importantly, community engagement seeks to shift the traditional power dynamics between researcher and community. Without community engagement, traditional community-based research often deepens the divide between community and researcher and tends to perpetuate the inequitable status quo.

9.   Antiracist Research Uses Team Science to Benefit From Diverse Perspectives

An antiracist researcher recognizes that various disciplines and types of expertise are needed to promote the collective good of people affected by racism (Hall et al., 2018; Semaj, 1996). For example, antiracist research assumes that collaborating scholars in medicine, Black history, and social work would be more effective in reducing cancer disparities among Black people than if they worked separately. Interdisciplinary research allows for the most creative and efficient approach to problem-solving because individuals from different fields provide unique perspectives, expertise, and approaches, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the problem and a multifaceted approach to possible solutions. Social workers should create interdisciplinary teams and seek out opportunities to be members of interdisciplinary teams while bringing their antiracist research perspective to the team.

10.   Antiracist Research is Concerned With Sharing Findings With Those Who Support and Oppose Liberation, Social Justice, and Reduced Inequity

The antiracist researcher ensures that study findings are appropriately interpreted, applied, and disseminated (Semaj, 1996). The meaning and utility of study findings should be evident to all parties (e.g., community members, stakeholders, researchers, and policymakers), and all parties should be able to access these findings. When members of the targeted population are part of the research team, this automatically aids in data interpretation, application, and dissemination because at every juncture of the research process, community members provide context and insight about how to make the research relevant to community needs. Research focused on reducing inequities for the target populations within the context of their lived experience can in turn become valuable evidence to catalyze larger structural changes that promote equity and oppose longstanding racist practices.

Challenges to Promoting Antiracist Research

Antiracist research rejects individualistic and self-serving career practices in favor of conducting research that challenges systems of inequality and involves the people being studied as partners in the research process. It employs a broad methodological

toolkit, encourages team science, and dissolves hierarchical structures that disadvantage BIPOC researchers. Despite the clear benefits of antiracist research and social work's ethical mandate to pursue antiracist research, the engrained traditions, habits, and practices of many social and behavioral sciences researchers and funding institutions are incompatible with antiracist research principles and may create barriers to implementing antiracist research. Next, we describe several challenges that researchers should expect to encounter across the antiracist research lifecycle.

Funding Prioritization and Agenda Setting

A significant challenge to antiracist research is the need to secure funding for proposals related to equity that overtly challenge the status quo. In their requests for proposals, funders invariably specify the acceptable frameworks, methodologies, and topic areas, and thus set the agenda for fundable research. Unfortunately, antiracist research proposals have not been well served by these agendas (Belgrave et al., 2019). Given that BIPOC investigators are more likely to examine inequities using an antiracist lens (Erosheva et al., 2020), this funding translates into a lack of funding for antiracist research.

There is a striking disparity between the likelihood of a white researcher and a BIPOC researcher receiving a National Institutes of Health (NIH) R01 grant (Ginther et al., 2018). Several studies have shown that Black researchers are less likely to be awarded NIH grants than their Asian, Hispanic/Latinx, and white colleagues (e.g., Ginther et al., 2011, 2018). Ginther and colleagues found that white researchers' NIH grant applications are funded at nearly twice the rate of Black researchers (29.3% vs. 17.1%) even after accounting for factors such as discipline, university ranking, and funding history (Ginther et al., 2011) as well as number of publications, citations, and journal impact factors (Ginther et al., 2018). Only 25% of this racial disparity is explained by objective measures. Unfortunately, racist gatekeepers are found in multiple systems in addition to funding agencies (e.g., grant reviewers), such as journals (e.g., editors, manuscript reviewers) and academia (e.g., voting faculty, supervisors). Even when personnel change, racism remains because institutional norms have been internalized.

The challenge of funding antiracist research is compounded by the fact that many grant review committees are primarily comprised of white researchers who have been funded previously (Barber et al., 2020); these reviewers interpret the funder's priorities and ultimately determine what research will be considered for funding. Although most savvy grant writers do in some ways tailor their proposal to their reviewers, BIPOC researchers must often consider the race of reviewers and how they may respond to overtly antiracist frameworks. The antiracist researcher, many of whom may be BIPOC, may have to wrestle with the idea of tempering aspects of their antiracist research paradigm to accommodate reviewers' potential biases or unfamiliarity with salient BIPOC cultural concepts.

Promotion and Tenure

Being promoted and achieving tenure is arguably the most important metric by which the work of academic researchers is validated, lauded, and rewarded (Arnold et al., 2021). However, because antiracist research runs counter to normative practices, pursuing an antiracist research path may negatively impact the antiracist faculty researcher prior to, and during, the promotion and tenure process. (Belgrave et al., 2019). Most universities have explicit expectations regarding what constitutes excellence in research, which typically includes obtaining external funding and publishing in high-impact and reputable peer-reviewed journals. However, antiracist research—which often uses CBPR, action research, and mixed-methods approaches—is often time-intensive and could lead to fewer peer-reviewed publications, especially in the initial career stages (Stevens et al., 2021). As a result, some junior faculty members are cautioned against using methodologies or approaches that require a commitment to inclusion, engagement, and structural changes, meaning that fewer senior faculty in the future will have experience with these methodologies. To foster antiracist research, universities need to explicitly acknowledge antiracist research as a form of excellence in research that is also recognized in promotion and tenure guidelines. If it is professionally detrimental to be an antiracist researcher at an academic institution, that institution is displaying its racism.

Production of Knowledge

Researchers and academics generally consider universities—especially research universities—to be premier institutions where transformative knowledge is produced. This notion is based on a biased premise that fails to acknowledge the cocreation of knowledge with community stakeholders. As a key example, academic institutions and research faculty should reflect critically on the criteria for coauthorship. Although coauthorship is extended to other academic researchers and graduate students involved in an article's writing and analysis, it rarely extends beyond the walls of academia and often excludes community partners who critically contributed to the study, especially in the conceptualization, recruitment, and implementation stages (Jull et al., 2017). An antiracist researcher recognizes and values the fact that community stakeholders and researchers necessarily have different skill sets, and they understand that imposing traditional coauthor requirements (e.g., academic writing skills) on community stakeholders is a form of scientific colonization that typically denies those stakeholders a place as coauthor. The antiracist researcher must explore opportunities to advocate for community coauthorship on all manuscripts that include a significant community stakeholder contribution.

Acknowledgement of Community Stakeholders as Co-Investigators

Community stakeholders must be acknowledged for their significant contributions to a research project's conceptualization and implementation. Unfortunately, some researchers who conduct research primarily with BIPOC exploit the knowledge,

networks, and implementation capacity of community partners without acknowledging those partners' support or sharing power. Antiracist research challenges the policies and procedures that fail to recognize community partners' significant contributions and thus perpetuate the myth that knowledge production exclusively occurs within academia. Including a community stakeholder as co-investigator or key personnel on a federal grant is one way to acknowledge their significant contributions and roles. However, grant reviewers may question the inclusion of certain nonacademic community stakeholders, and therefore, antiracist researchers may need to provide especially robust justifications for community stakeholder inclusion in, for example, primarily quantitative antiracist research. At the same time, antiracist researchers need to recognize that for some community leaders, being listed as key personnel on a grant may burden them due to personal priorities, organizational bandwidth, time commitments, and capacity. Therefore, antiracist researchers must openly communicate with the community partner about the process, expectations, and opportunities for progressively building community capacity.

Self-Preservation

Antiracist research requires values that reflect a personal critical awareness of embedded racist systems and their manifestation in everyday practices. This awareness presents a significant emotional challenge to the antiracist researcher, who must make daily decisions about whether to respond to or intentionally ignore instances of implicit racism within academia and elsewhere. This dilemma is often exemplified for early career researchers, who may fear professional repercussions for speaking up against racist policies and practices within their institution. The antiracist researcher may also experience frustration at the discrepancy between their institution's public support of antiracism and the steps the institution takes to become antiracist (Dei, 2005) and may fear being labeled as an obstructionist and a dissentient for expressing their frustration. Most importantly, the antiracist researcher must cultivate realistic expectations about their role as a researcher and learn to navigate daily situations to preserve their equilibrium. The stress and anxiety resulting from antiracist research requires consistent self-care practices, a diverse interdisciplinary research team, and a resilient social support system (Sue et al., 2019).

Recommendations

Antiracist research calls for renegotiating the conventional research process. In line with the tenets of our antiracist research framework, we offer recommendations for promoting antiracist research. We look to social work researchers, scholars, and practitioners to begin or continue using these recommendations in their antiracist research.

The Research Team

Principal Investigator

As the leader of the research team, the antiracist researcher acknowledges their research positionality. That is, they must consider how their personal experiences, identities, educational backgrounds, and scholarly training inform their perspectives, knowledge production process, interpretation of results, and other components of the research process. The PI must not be colorblind (i.e., not acknowledging the presence and consequences of racism), an ideology that further oppresses BIPOC. Instead, the PI should acknowledge that nearly every American institution has deep racist histories, including the institutions our study participants interact with. In an antiracist research paradigm, it is vital that the principal investigator and other members of the research team recognize the humanity and dignity of participants rather than simply focusing on their deficits, which will invariably impact how the research is implemented. The principal investigator must care about statistical significance, clinical significance, and, most importantly, the real-world outcomes of the research for study participants.

Team Personnel

The insightful antiracist researcher will assemble a team comprising subject-matter experts, experts in race and racism, people with lived experience, and those with a demonstrated commitment to culturally competent and antiracist research. Antiracist researchers ensure that their research team—including research assistants, statisticians, interventionists, and other staff—is interdisciplinary and consists of members of the target population. We encourage researchers to think innovatively about the membership of their antiracist research teams and partner with unconventional collaborators (e.g., policymakers; journalists; political science, journalism, and economics scholars; faculty from historically Black colleges and universities and minority-serving institutions; and grassroots, civic, and activist organizations). The antiracist research paradigm rejects the hierarchical organization of traditional research teams in favor of a more democratic and consensual decision-making process. All members of antiracist research teams should be valued and given roles and responsibilities consistent with their expertise.

Team Training

In addition to training the team in research methods (e.g., data collection, fidelity), researchers should train their teams in antiracist research. For example, trainings could consist of team members discussing how a research question might be addressed using conventional versus antiracist methods. Trainings might involve bringing in a member of the target population as an expert consultant on topics and approaches. Other training strategies could include assigning and discussing antiracist research articles during team meetings as a way to inform protocols, data collection, and recruitment methods.

Ethics

Each research team member should have a comprehensive understanding of the ethical implications of their research. Antiracist researchers are keenly aware of their target populations' experiences with research and how these experiences have shaped their views of researchers and research institutions. This includes historical ethical violations enacted in the name of research (e.g., the Tuskegee Syphilis Study [1932–1972] and Henrietta Lacks and the HeLa cell line [1951]) as well as contemporary health care disparities that may not be included in the ethics trainings required by most institutions (e.g., CITI), such as people of color dying at disproportionally high rates from COVID-19 compared to white people (Dalsania et al., 2022) and Black women dying at higher rates than white women during childbirth (MacDorman et al., 2021). Antiracist researchers must also make a concerted effort to understand experiences that may not appear in trainings but have a negative impact on the populations they serve.

The Research Process

Theory

When selecting their guiding theoretical and conceptual frameworks, antiracist researchers should consider the manifestation and influence of racism and social and political conditions on the behaviors and outcomes of their target population. Antiracist researchers should add a strengths-based perspective to their conceptual framework to acknowledge internal and external assets and resources among the target population. Theories to consider include intersectionality (Cho et al., 2013), critical race theory (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2019), the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2007), the cultural variant model (Henderson et al., 2017), Hummer's 1996 framework for the study of Black–white differences in health and mortality, and the NIH/National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities' new research framework (Alvidrez et al., 2019).

Research Questions

Like conventional researchers, the antiracist researcher recognizes that theory should inform their research questions, which should center the experiences of BIPOC (e.g., the influences of upstream factors such as racism and downstream factors such as racial disparities). The researcher is careful to indicate that racism—not race—is the risk factor. Antiracist researchers are clear that disparities originate in environments and contexts and not in individuals' melanin. As a result, researchers should ensure that their research questions place the onus of responsibility on systems, including the system in which the researcher works, and not on the populations they serve. Research that moves beyond examining (Black/white) racial differences is needed to fully consider the influence of racism in producing and sustaining racial differences. Research questions may address ideas directly related to

antiracism (e.g., how parents foster antiracism in white children). However, antiracist research questions may focus on broad behaviors and outcomes, such as educational, criminal justice, and health disparities. Antiracist research questions are not limited to those directly examining antiracism.

To dismantle racism, research questions must look beyond individual-level problems and interventions to transformational questions and interventions that seek to address institutional racism. We recommend, for example, that researchers develop policy-related research questions that assess the impact and costs of policies and inform future policies. Such research questions might ask how discriminatory lending policies impact home- and business-ownership in BIPOC communities, or whether Housing Trust Fund support leads to more stable housing than Housing Choice Vouchers among BIPOC families. A driving motivator of every research question should be dismantling structural racism and promoting equity.

Research Methods

As scholars, we recognize that there are multiple ways of coming to know. To be an antiracist researcher, we must reconsider our epistemologies and research methods, just as universities, journals, and funding agencies must reconsider what defines rigorous research and how it is done. Experimental designs are not always feasible or ethical. For many, quasi-experimental designs or waitlist experimental designs are ideal for historically excluded and marginalized populations. Antiracist research is not antiquantitative. Rather, in addition to quantitative methods, antiracist researchers should consider alternative methods, such as qualitative research (Patton, 2014), mixed-methods research (V. L. P. Clark, 2008), Photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997), action research (Stringer & Aragón, 2020), and advocacy research (Gilbert, 1997). These alternative methods may result in the production of knowledge that engages, empowers, and advances equity for the target population. All of these methodologies are useful tools for the antiracist researcher and research team.

Measures

Antiracist researchers should make considerable effort to assess whether study measures are valid for their study populations. Consistent with the U.S. Census and best practices, researchers should allow respondents to self-identify ethnicity and race by asking at least two separate questions. Moreover, researchers should report their process for defining race so that it is transparent to those who read their reports. More studies—especially large studies with nationally representative samples—should include cultural variables, such as perceived discrimination, racial socialization, ethnic identity, John Henryism, and anticipatory racism, as these variables are linked to various disparities (Banerjee et al., 2018; T. T. Clark, 2014; T. T. Clark et al., 2015; Forrest-Bank & Cuellar, 2018; Priest & Williams, 2018).

When possible, studies should attempt to measure difficult-to-quantify constructs such as structural and institutional racism. Researchers should avoid using race as a proxy for unmeasured confounders such as social, cultural, and environmental influences, as it is a poor proxy for these variables (Winker, 2004). Antiracist researchers understand the need for measures to have cultural validity (the extent to which measures assess constructs that have meaning for a particular cultural group) among the target population. For example, the concept of family might differ across racialized group and ethnicity (Belgrave et al., 2022), which a culturally valid measurement tool would capture.

Data Analysis

Researchers should not limit their conceptualization of race and ethnicity to control variables. Instead, researchers should explore impacts by racialized group and ethnicity and disaggregate results by racialized group and ethnicity. Researchers are encouraged to consider strengths within BIPOC populations by analyzing data to highlight those attributes and characteristics that contribute to success. For example, an antiracist data analytic question might be, "What attributes contribute to success among some BIPOC individuals despite racism and discrimination?"

Statistics are not racist. However, our assumptions and manipulation of statistics may be racist. Researchers should interrogate their favored models and consider the possibility that they might be racist. For example, is race—a social construction designed to oppress BIPOC—a predictor of outcomes in your model? Have you included a measure of racism in your model? To ignore the role of racism in a study that includes BIPOC is unethical. One way to prevent racist research is to involve multiple team members with varying backgrounds in all steps of the research process, including the analytic phase, which should increase the likelihood that a team member will identify a racist assumption or methodology that may go unrecognized by other team members.

Interpretation and Manuscript Writing

Data interpretation is the act of a person or team reviewing and explaining study results. Interpretation can be influenced by a variety of biases (e.g., social, cultural, mathematical, and historical) to the extent that two research teams could review the same results and yield distinct interpretations. Qualitative researchers have established the importance of self-reflection and examining biases in all aspects of the research process (Deliovsky, 2017; Nairn et al., 2004). It is therefore important for data interpretation to involve multiple individuals from varying backgrounds (e.g., community stakeholders, researchers, paid consultants, policymakers) and perspectives who are committed to antiracist research. To intentionally seek a broad range of contributors in the data interpretation process, researchers could use member checking, a practice used in qualitative research in which findings are presented

to participants or members of the target population, and these individuals interpret those findings in light of their context and lived experiences. Finally, antiracist researchers should consider inviting members of the target population to colead the conceptualization and writing of the discussion section of manuscripts. This allows the target population to shape the implications of the results and identify study strengths and weaknesses. Throughout the data interpretation process, researchers should consider the potential impact of their findings on their target population. Will the findings advance or further marginalize the community? Researchers must ensure that study findings will be interpreted and disseminated without stigmatizing or pathologizing the people studied.

Dissemination

An important principle of antiracist research is the need to share results with both the research community and the target population. Antiracist researchers actively ensure that products from their research are developed in partnership with the target population and are available and accessible to everyone—especially individuals and communities affected by racism and inequity. In addition to publishing in peer-reviewed journals, researchers must ensure that the target population has access to the findings. Dissemination outlets for the antiracist researcher may include local media, social media, blogs, podcasts, art, cartoons, comic books, community newsletters, school newsletters, faith-based bulletins, and community dialogues. Research findings can also be disseminated via informational posters posted throughout relevant buildings, flyers put under community members' doors, or an informal coffee hour hosted by researchers to continue an ongoing dialogue about research findings and applications. The antiracist research team will need to be technologically savvy to ensure that they are knowledgeable about all available outlets and their potential reach, particularly within the target population or community. Team members or consultants in journalism and communications would be helpful to ensure access and readability. For example, a one-page infographic, research brief, or policy brief might be more relevant and impactful than a 20-page journal article. Finally, it is critical that university tenure guidelines include credit for publishing and knowledge exposure in nonacademic platforms and that this expanded platform is valued as a vital part of community impact and influence (Wood, 2021).

Funders

Significant funding is required to eliminate disparities. We are making a clarion call to funders to prioritize research on the causes, consequences, mechanisms, measurement, costs, and prevention of racism. We need new research questions and methods that will inform interventions designed to disrupt patterns of oppression and institutional racism. Antiracist researchers need funders to move from prioritizing research questions that are unlikely to lead to interventions to research questions that may

have real-world effects. We need research focused on developing and evaluating interventions, policies, or practices that seek to achieve equity in health, behavior, and finances. Despite encouraging examples from the William T. Grant Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and National Institute on Drug Abuse's recent allotment of $1 million for health disparities research, more funders need to commit to a sea change in research focused on preventing, reducing, or eliminating disparities on a large scale among historically marginalized populations.

In addition, substantial funding should be allotted for antiracist research. If we are committed to antiracist research, we must provide ample funding in the same way that we substantially fund traditional behavioral research. This funding should be significant and allow for a large number of awards so that multiple researchers have the opportunity to test antiracist interventions.

To increase the number of people skilled in antiracist research methods, funders could increase their efforts to mentor researchers who want to learn these methods and increase promotion of current mentoring opportunities that could focus on antiracist research methods, such as career development awards (e.g., K01), research diversity supplement awards, NIH's Research Training Initiative for Student Enhancement (RISE) Program, and the Ruth L. Kirschstein Predoctoral Individual National Research Service Award (F31). Funders could also issue a special call to fund antiracist research centers, which would allow antiracist researchers to collaborate with other researchers for increased research impact while simultaneously mentoring students and faculty in antiracist research methods.

BIPOC researchers may represent a large portion of antiracist researchers. Given that many BIPOC researchers work in higher education and may be overtaxed with teaching and service expectations—especially BIPIOC who identify as women—funders should proactively design programs to eliminate barriers to participating in grant workshops, such as providing full travel support, offering virtual options rather than requiring in-person participation, and providing funding for faculty participants to buy out of a course to create protected time for grant-writing skill development. Funders should increase resources for and promotion of current mentoring opportunities focused on grant writing, such as the University of California San Francisco's Research in Implementation Science for Equity (RISE) Program and Programs to Increase Diversity Among Individuals Engaged in Health Related Research (PRIDE) at Washington University in St. Louis.

Beyond providing economic support, funders can provide infrastructural support for antiracist research by training proposal reviewers to understand and view as legitimate the proposals submitted by antiracist researchers. Similarly, funders should continue to increase representation of BIPOC on scientific panels. Given that those who would be invited to serve on these panels are likely engaged in high service and teaching loads at their institutions, funders should develop infrastructures to support them so that they do not self-exclude due to their

disproportionately higher workloads. In addition, funders could choose to require a DEI section in every proposal that illustrates the principal investigator's ideas about how they will engage in antiracist research practice and require an annual report on DEI activities and outcomes to ensure accountability. Further, funders must critically examine their funding opportunity announcements, peer-review systems (including the racial and gender compositions of review committees), and the extent to which they provide clear guidelines and training to review committees to address potential biases.

Universities

Universities are expected to engage in antiracist activities, including antiracist research and pedagogy. To do this, universities need to become familiar with antiracism and strengthen their DEI commitments and activities (e.g., committing to hiring and retaining BIPOC faculty, staff, and students). Like most organizations, universities are better at achieving diversity than equity and inclusion. To achieve equity, universities must require equity, not recommend it. For example, the university's personnel and promotion process should be equitable and not punitive for researchers who engage in antiracist research methods, which may be time consuming and slower to produce research deliverables than other research methods. Universities should not expect BIPOC to lead most DEI activities, particularly given that experiences of racism already present a significant burden to BIPOC faculty that may impact their research activities. Universities should go beyond ensuring that BIPOC have seats at the table, ensuring that BIPOC and other marginalized groups have voices at the table (Jonker et al., 2021). Research is needed that investigates the role of institutional review boards (IRBs) in perpetuating racism (Jonker et al., 2021) to inform policies and procedures that would help ensure that all units are operating in ways that are antiracist and socially just. In addition, antiracist research will require that graduate programs modify curricula to ensure that students are trained in these methods.

Antiracism, like CBPR and other alternative approaches, requires a cultural shift in how research is traditionally implemented in academic institutions, and this cultural shift encompasses many levels. Change on one level (e.g., faculty) will require change on another level (e.g., community) to be effective in uptake. It requires a power shift with BIPOC communities reclaiming power, voice, and agency as to how research is designed and implemented in their communities. This power shift and partnership will impact how finances are divided and managed, the research team composition, and how the community benefits from the partnership. Given these challenges, antiracist research will require systemic change at all levels (e.g., department level, university level). Universities should lead in promoting and supporting antiracist research.

Research Example

An example of a research project that used an antiracism lens is Goings and colleagues (2022). This interdisciplinary research team representing social work, social psychology, and developmental psychology used data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health to examine the relationship between interpersonal, school, and parenting factors and externalizing behaviors among Black youth. The research team consisted primarily of Black investigators and parents of Black youth. The project used ecological systems theory as its primary theoretical framework, which allowed for the acknowledgement of racism at multiple levels; a strengths perspective supplemented ecological systems theory. The research team assumed that Black youth, like all youth, have strengths and are a resilient group despite the severe and persistent racism they experience. The team centered racism at every step in the research process, from research question to data management and analyses and manuscript writing. Contrary to the popular narrative in America, the research findings suggested that the vast majority of Black youth participants (74.4%) reported no involvement in any of the externalizing behaviors the study examined (e.g., serious fights, attacking to harm, stealing, drug selling). Of the participants who engaged in serious fights, many lived in low-income neighborhoods that placed them at greater risk for interpersonal violence. In addition, the rate of one or more externalizing behaviors among Black youth (11.7%) was comparable to that of non-Hispanic white youth (10.5%). Only a small percentage (2.3%) of participants reported involvement in an array of externalizing behaviors, which has become the prevalent narrative regarding Black youth. Stemming from an antiracist process, these finding make a powerful argument for ending the narrative that demonizes Black youth. Findings were disseminated to the community via social media and will also be disseminated via the news media and infographics. Antiracist research lenses and methods like these have the potential to empower marginalized populations.

Conclusion

The antiracist researcher is well positioned to challenge the systems and policies that maintain institutional racism. In our allegory, the antiracist researcher seeks to repair individual apartments while also renovating the structural components of the building by replacing the cracked and crumbling foundation of racism with a foundation of liberation, equity, and opportunity. In practical terms, the antiracist researcher seeks to use antiracist research methods to ask salient questions that center the experiences of BIPOC and achieve racial and ethnic equity.

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