COLLECT MEANINGFUL DATA: Centering Anti-Racism in Data Practices

Purpose: Anti-racism is important in data work because it can help identify systemic barriers of oppression both within and outside the organization, create a more comfortable and just work environment, and provide opportunities to dismantle racist structures out in the community. The fight for racial justice is lifelong. Below are some fundamental concepts and practices to consider when doing anti-racist data work. *Also check out the Collect Meaningful Data: Decolonizing Your Data Practices and Being Responsive to Community Norms emPower Tools.*

What is Racial Inequity?

Current systems, institutions, policies and laws facilitate inequities across racialized groups in the US today. This affects how groups of people fare in terms of wealth, health, education and many other aspects of life.

Examples of Gaps in Racial Equity:

- Education
- Income and wealth development (employment)
- Housing, infrastructure and amenities
- Health (physical, emotional, and spiritual)
- Justice, dignity and respect
- Civic participation (such as voting rights)

Goals of Anti-Racism:

- People of all ethnicities are owners, planners, and decision-makers in the systems that govern their lives.
- We acknowledge and account for past and current inequities, and provide all people, particularly those most impacted by racial inequities, the infrastructure needed to thrive.
- Everyone benefits from a more just and equitable system.

Types of Racism

Individual Racism:
The beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways.

Interpersonal Racism:
Occurs between individuals. These are public expressions of racism, often involving slurs, biases, or demeaning words or actions.

Cultural Racism:
Representations, messages and stories conveying the idea that behaviors and values associated with white people or "whiteness" are automatically "better" or more "normal" than those associated with other racially-defined groups.

Institutional Racism:
The ways in which policies and practices of organizations or parts of systems (schools, courts, transportation authorities, etc.) create different outcomes for people of different ethnicities.

Structural Racism:
The overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society. This is the complex system by which racism is developed, maintained and protected.

Internalized Racism:
The conscious and unconscious acceptance of a racial or ethnic hierarchy in which one group (white people, for example) is consistently ranked above members of other racialized or ethnic groups.

Race, Ethnicity and Indigeneity

Race is a *social construct* and <u>not</u> a biological fact.

- Samuel Morton invented five "races" in the early 1800s as a classification of human beings to justify white dominance over non-white people.
- "Race" categories have changed over time. For example, Italian, Irish, and Jewish people were not considered "white" a few decades ago.
- When successful sequencing of the full human genome was announced in 2000, DNA sequencing pioneer Craig Venter stated, "The concept of race has no genetic or scientific basis."

Ethnicity

- While race is a category created by dominant cultures and imposed on other groups, ethnicity is an identity people claim for themselves, based on common language, culture and current, recent or historic places of origin.

Indigeneity

- Indigeneity (being indigenous) generally refers to peoples with ancient, pre-colonial history in an area where they live or once lived that has since been taken over by other groups through conquest, colonialism, and/or genocide.

When Collecting Data…

Provide Transparency

- Ensure participants are aware their information is being collected and that they understand the purposes for which you are collecting their data.
- The consequences of <u>not</u> providing informed consent could be exploiting participants' traumas for the benefit of your organization or endangering the participant for sharing their story.

Deliver Accessibility

Make accommodations available for *all* potential participants, including primary languages, various reading and writing skill levels, and developmental or physical disabilities, body sizes and so forth. Make spaces and forms/resources accessible.

Follow Through on What You Say

Ensure that you follow through on any promises you make to participants, especially if they have invested their time in a project and shared personal information.

Before Presenting Data…

Prioritize Lived Experience

Invite and include reviewers throughout the data process (collection, analysis, presentation etc.) who have lived experiences similar to those individuals who are reflected in the data. The reviewers can help you develop the most respectful and accurate way to present your data, identify root causes behind the data, and cultivate new solutions.

Practice in Community

Test your materials with various audiences, especially people from the same communities and lived experiences as your participants. Try: focus groups, informal staff meetings, chats with community members, or one-on-one interviews.

Offer Context

- Avoid "blaming the victim."
- Be sure to provide context and root causes when presenting information about differences between racial groups.

Anti-Racist Data Principles

Analyze Power	Build Representative Leadership	Recognize Gatekeeping	Identify Manifestations of Racism	Learn from History	Maintain Accountability	Share Culture
Before collecting data, it is important to assess the power dynamics between your organization and the communities you serve. Do participants feel obligated to provide information in fear of losing services or receiving a lower quality of service?	Leaders of data projects should be openly anti-racist and actively fighting for anti-racism & equity. Make an effort to have a leadership team that includes members of the communities you serve.	Gatekeeping is when staff or programs decide who receives services and the quality of service delivery. Are all members of the community receiving the same level of care or the same kinds of opportunities?	In what ways does your programming reinforce systems of oppression? How is your programming actively fighting for change? After identifying where racial inequities exist, plan how you can make those areas anti-racist.	Ask questions about your organization to identify areas to improve. What is the history of your organization? Who founded the work and for what purpose? Are other organizations doing the similar work? How can you foster partnerships?	How does your organization stay accountable to the community on racism? What policies are in place for when staff or community members experience racism? Have current policies been reviewed to ensure they are not reinforcing racist systems?	Respect and incorporate cultural considerations for the communities you serve into programming and data processes. Honoring customs and traditions can be a great act of resistance to systemic racism.

We encourage you to share these resources with your organization, and other local social service organizations. PLEASE NOTE this handout is the intellectual property of The Capacity Collective. Please do not duplicate parts, or adapt, without the express permission of The Capacity Collective. Thank you for supporting our work! **Special thank you to Araceli Efigenio for her work on this tool!**