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CONCEPTS FOR ANTIRACIST POLICY FORMULATION

by

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BS, Georgia Institute of Technology

A Capstone Submitted to the Graduate Faculty
of Georgia State University in Partial Fulfillment
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APPROVAL PAGE

CONCEPTS FOR ANTIRACIST POLICY FORMULATION

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I acknowledge the people in my life that have encouraged my change, betterment, and constant journey for truth. Thank you to my family, my friends, and my partner, without whom this work and these thoughts would never have made it to the page.

Author's Statement Page

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Sophia Steinberg

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Table 1.0 Summary of Concepts and Characteristics for Antiracist Policy Formulation

Introduction and Background:

Racism is undoubtedly a “hot topic” in America today. Since the murder of Trayvon Martin, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has swept over the nation, ruffled feathers, roared, and been a call to action. Most importantly, the BLM movement has highlighted and reinvigorated the discussion of race and racism, and prompted us to ask “what do we do next?” The uncomplicated answer would be to act-- to create policies and programs that ensure the end of undue violence toward Black people, toward Latinx and Hispanic people, toward ethnic and religious minorities, and give all of the American people their overdue balance of equity. Instead, we see the growth of immigrants ripped from their homeland placed in detention camps; we see continuing police violence against Black people; the rise of anti-Semitic attacks and rhetoric; and the escalation of anti-Asian and anti-Pacific Islander brutality. The question of “why?” now comes with an air of futility. “Why does this keep happening?” The reality is that without improvement in the laws and policies underlying our current structures and systems, we will continue to see more of the same. The field of public health has declared racism a public health crisis. To meaningfully address racism in current and future policies requires development of policy formulation processes and considerations that specifically bring an antiracism lens and approach.

The current practice of using an “equity lens” for policy formulation has been valuable in building the foundation for antiracist policy work. However, as pointed out by Ford and Airhihenbuwa, racism persists in public health and policy in many ways, and the field’s current theoretical and methodological conventions inadequately address the complexity with which structural racism influences policy. (Ford and Airhihenbuwa, 2011).

The complexity with race is both its presence as a societal construct and its pervasiveness in our personal lives. Race is a social construct that has evolved over time and has different meanings to different people and in different contexts. However, there is a historical flow to the way that racism manifests itself now. “Raza,” the Spanish word for race, first appeared in 1611 in a Spanish dictionary. However, the idea of “racism” was born from the concept of a “racial identity,” which came from Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus’ work in 1735 to categorize various races and assign them certain attributes. For example, he described Europeans as having traits associated with “upstanding citizenship, deference to the law,” while Africans were described as “lazy and fickle.” These self-described “objectively scientific observations” became

the foundation for attributing moral value to skin color, and to justify the economic, political, physical, and cultural exploitation of nonwhite people across the globe and throughout history (Zamalin, 2019).

The term “racism” is notoriously hard to define; the term comes with certain pre-existing connotations, and it is often used to describe other injustices such as anti-Semitism, sexism, and more. Racism has been defined as the marginalization and oppression of people of color, based on a socially constructed racial hierarchy that privileges certain groups over others (Anti-Defamation League, 2020). Ultimately, it is based in racial prejudice as well as the social and institutional power that stems from this prejudice (Dismantling Racism Works Web Workbook, 2021). Racism has been engrained in Western society for a long time, and has evolved from pseudo-science into national, state, and local policies that continue to perpetuate similar beliefs to the ones described by Limmaues. However, the United States has a special relationship to racism. The Naturalization Act of 1790 established our history by granting citizenship to “free white person[s]” and thus excluded Native Americans, indentured servants, slaves, free Blacks, and eventually Asians (Immigration History, 2020). Race in America has been used as a tool for slavery, genocide, segregation, abuse of voting rights, and, ultimately, the abuse of human rights. From the beginning of our history as an independent nation, racism and specifically white supremacist culture has been key to American political decision-making.

Systemic racism arises from a combination of systems, institutions, and social factors that disadvantage people of color and cause harm, marginalization, and disenfranchisement to communities of color, as well as ethnic and religious minorities. Systemic racism is grounded in the laws and institutions which were historically centered around white supremacy, and exist in the institutions and policies that either actively advantage dominant social groups (i.e. white people) or actively marginalize or exclude communities of color. Systemic racism seeps into interpersonal relationships, our language, and our behavior, and these factors often maintain, support, and perpetuate systemic inequities and racism (Anti-Defamation League, 2020 and Dismantling Racism Works Web Workbook, 2021).

One example of a manifestation of systemic racism that affects public health is police violence. Studies show that interactions with law enforcement are disproportionately found among Black Americans (Krieger et al., 2015, Swaine & McCarthy, 2017). Recent studies also suggest that over the life course, one in every 1000 Black men are killed by the police in the US,

making them 2.5 times more likely to be killed by police than White men (Edwards et al., 2019). In 2015 and 2016, there were a total of 2238 deaths due to police violence. The average death rate due to police was 3.5 per million persons; yet, when the data are stratified, we see a much different story. Native Americans had the highest death rate at 7.8 per million persons; Black people, a rate of 7.2 per million persons, and Hispanics, a rate of 3.3 per million persons. All these rates were higher than the death rate for whites, which was 2.9 per million persons. Between 2015 and 2016, more than 112,129 years of life lost were due to police violence, and while people of color only comprise 38.5% of the population, they accounted for 51.5% of all years of life lost during this time period (Bui et al., 2018).

Systemic racism can also affect the way that we frame political and public health issues, the data that we collect, and how we report it. The 2019 Global Burden of Diseases, Injuries, and Risk Factors (GBD) study on fatal police violence found that between 1980 and 2018 there were an estimated 30,800 deaths, representing 17,100 more deaths than reported by the US National Vital Statistics System (NVSS). The greatest under-reporting by the NVSS of deaths was among non-Hispanic Black people, with over 5600 deaths missing out of an estimated 9540 total deaths, which reflects 59.5% that were misclassified. Additionally, the NVSS did not record 2580 deaths out of an estimated 5170 deaths among Hispanic people of any race, resulting in a 50% misclassification of NVSS data (GBD 2019 Police Violence US Subnational Collaborators, 2021).

Economic inequalities, including a significant wealth gap and income inequalities, have been one of the most glaring reflections of structural racism. While three of the wealthiest people in the US (Warren Buffet, Jeff Bezos, and Bill Gates) own more wealth than the entire bottom 50% of the American population combined, more than 30% of Black and 27% of Latinx households have *negative* or *zero* net worth (Collins C, Hoxie J., 2017); this is exemplary of the persisting wealth gap among person of color (POC) communities. In fact, as of 2019, Fortune 500 CEOs included only five Black people and seventeen Latinx people, reflecting *less than 5% of the total* (The Society Pages, 2020). Further, as of the second quarter of 2021, the income of the median White worker was 27% higher than the typical Black worker, and more than 30% higher than the median Latinx worker, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021). People of color remain overrepresented in lower-paying jobs and vocations. Black workers are more likely than any other workers to work in low-wage front-

line jobs such as public transit, childcare, social services, and healthcare and are thus also overrepresented among Covid-19's frontline essential workers. Black workers occupy 13% of jobs across the economy but make up nearly 20% of essential jobs that pay less than \$16.54 an hour, the wage estimated to meet the basic needs of a family of four. While the US government does not aggregate data of Covid-19 deaths by occupation, many of the worst outbreaks and deaths have occurred in occupations that employ a disproportionate number of Black workers, such as public transit, nursing homes, and long-term healthcare facilities. This is directly linked to the higher rates of illness and death among Black communities during the pandemic crisis (Kinder & Ford, 2020). In response to increasing recognition of the many ways in which structural and system racism create barriers to health opportunities and increased risk for communities of color, over 200 US cities and counties, as well as three states, have declared racism a public health crisis (American Public Health Association, 2021).

For the public health community in the United States, eliminating health disparities, including racial and ethnic disparities, has been a targeted goal since 1998, when it was included in Healthy People 2010. Since then, this goal, as well as the goal of achieving health equity (included in Healthy People 2020), has been articulated in all subsequent Healthy People releases (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). However, it is obvious that racial and ethnic disparities have persisted. In the early 2000s, the notion of a "racial equity lens" was created. A "racial equity lens" is a set of questions and considerations that are included throughout a decision-making process posed by a company, institution, or team that attempts to interrupt the impact of unintended consequences of racism by taking into consideration the lived experiences and perspectives of racially diverse communities. These considerations are rooted in the notion of justice and inclusion (American Public Health Association, 2015). Applying an equity lens is a process, rather than just a consideration, that attempts to impact the design *and* implementation of policies affecting under-served and socially marginalized groups by identifying and eliminating social and economic barriers (University of Minnesota, 2021). Since then, many companies, nonprofits, corporations, and government agencies have employed some version of an "equity lens." Ultimately, a racial equity lens consists of questions and considerations that *need to* be made during a decision-making process, whether it be a company hiring process or national legislation. The racial equity lens typically considers the definitions of terms (i.e. race, equity, etc.), employs data to make data-driven decisions, considers the

perspectives and voices of marginalized and affected communities, and acts with urgency to enact change (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014 and Sornum et al., 2021)

However, what a racial equity lens and its components include and require varies from organization to organization, and across different types of policies and settings. This variation highlights the importance of identifying the core requirements for advancing racial equity and core concepts for advancing antiracist policies to provide a consistent and translatable approach that can be applied to policymaking and review. Antiracism is more than opposing racism; it is defined by the active process(es) of demolishing historical and societal structures that perpetuate racism, including the philosophies, institutions, and people that believe, interact with, and embrace them. Antiracism is grounded in questions that challenge the status quo and demand redress of history and past injustices (Zamalin, 2019). The issue with a malleable “equity lens” is that many Americans already see themselves as “antiracist” and use their own experiences and anecdotes to prove it. However, the notion that one is “not racist” is not the same as being antiracist. (Zamalin, 2019). The need for clearly defined and operationalized concepts of antiracism that can be applied to policy formulation is imperative to ensure a consistent equity-based approach that does not just change the institutions that may have once perpetuated racism but works to tear down racist institutions altogether.

*“Certain forms of political engagement embody its spirit much more fully than others. Movement for Black Lives activists better exemplify it through calling for an end to police brutality than do American corporations whose corporate diversity programs focus on hiring black managers, while ignoring the economic well-being of the vast majority of their workforce. Making antiracist statements matters, but infinitely less than supporting antiracist policies that change structures.” —Alex Zamalin, **How to be an Antiracist***

*“There is a strange kind of enigma associated with the problem of racism. No one, or almost no one, wishes to see themselves as racist; still, racism persists, real and tenacious” —Albert Memmi, **Racism***

Alex Zamalin, author of “Antiracism: An Introduction,” states that an essential part of antiracist politics is the direct and ongoing confrontation with “the philosophy of racism, the

individuals who embrace its ideas, and the structures and institutions that perpetuate it” (Zamlin, 2019). The actions required by this definition may alienate some of those claiming to be “antiracist.” The rhetoric in much of mainstream media surrounding race often perpetuates the narrative that the issues and disparities related to race are nothing more than a character flaw of people who are part of that race. This has led to the rise of colorblindness. “Colorblindness,” both an attitude and a school of thought, asserts that nonracial factors such as income, education, etc., can explain “seemingly” racial circumstances (Apfelbaum et al., 2012). Colorblindness explicitly disregards the study of race and how it affects these inequities. And while colorblindness has surreptitiously found its way into policy, we have seen no significant decline in the inequities that fall entirely along racial lines (Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010).

Critical Race Theory (CRT), a term coined within academic legal studies in the 1970s-80s by scholar advocates interested in exploring how public policy could be used to protect civil rights, has been a key step in understanding how policies and laws affect systemic racism, and challenges notions of colorblindness that would state that laws and policies have no specific intended or unintended effects on racial subgroups. CRT was not created as a new concept but is a compilation of tenets and constructs that are historically pertinent when it comes to understanding persistent racial disparities in economic, political, and social experiences, health, and outcomes (Lantz, 2021). The four central tenets of CRT, as summarized in a review by Paula Lantz, are as follows:

1. “Race is a social construction – the way that race is defined and experienced is the result of social and political thought and actions that change over time.”
2. “Although individuals can indeed be racist, racism and its outcomes are perpetuated in society through social processes above and beyond individual actions including through cultural norms, institutional rules, and laws and regulations.”
3. “Because the differential treatment of individuals based upon racial classification is embedded within social systems and institutions—including public policy and law—racism is commonplace rather than rare and aberrant.”
4. “While racism is perpetuated at the structural/macro level in society, listening to and understanding the lived experiences of individuals is essential for understanding how racism works to create inequities in individual outcomes, including health” (Lantz, 2021).

CRT is an essential framework that works alongside racial equity efforts to inform policy decisions and formulation. CRT establishes that racism finds its way into law and policy in two forms: *de jure* (by law) and *de facto* (in fact, not officially sanctioned, but is an effect of a law). For example, racial segregation (“separate but equal”) was upheld by the 1896 US Supreme Court case of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, where the Supreme Court ruled that segregation did not violate the 14th Amendment. This was a crucial decision because it allowed for the segregation of students of color for almost 60 years, until the landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* in 1954. The students of color that attended these segregated schools were experiencing *de facto* racism, meaning that direct political action kept them marginalized, limited, and segregated in the realm of education. Even with the decision that followed, the *Brown* case, *de facto* racism persisted. While the Supreme Court ruled that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal,” *de facto* segregation continued as students continued to be segregated by race (Lantz, 2021). Ultimately, a key part of antiracist decision making, and the Critical Race Theory is the consideration of policy and law and how it perpetuates, supports, or even remains neutral in the face of racism. Even if policies don’t create *de jure* racism, the impact of the policy can create or perpetuate *de facto* racism. It is critical that the intended and unintended impacts of policies, including their differential impacts on different population groups are fully explored.

Concepts for Antiracist Policy Development

More recently, the main remedy to political and social racism has been the development and application of a “racial equity lens.” While this has been successful and valuable in prompting policymakers to think about the implications of their work, it has been inadequate for creating a framework or a set of antiracist concepts to consider when employing the lens. It is the purpose of this paper to identify and define those important concepts and values, such as CRT, so they can be explicitly included as part of any policy formulation process. The goal is to build on this “lens,” which can be subjective based on the viewer, and to provide specific considerations that must be made to de-systematize racism.

The three overarching concepts of antiracism identified below include empowerment and inclusion, targeted universalism, and historical context. It is through the utilization of these

concepts that policymakers can help ensure that policies by design and their intended and unintended consequences would be antiracist.

A key characteristic of these three concepts is the importance of sensitivity to local context. Through the consideration of empowerment and inclusion, targeted universalism, and historical context, policymakers can begin to see and understand the stories, lived experiences, and realities of the communities being affected through policy creation. These three concepts work together to alert policymakers to the local context of a policy through required steps like policy disaggregation, encouraging and supporting local political participation, considering short and long-term effects of policies to specific communities, and the consideration of previous policies and their failures. Sensitivity to local context is defined as a context-sensitive approach: understanding the complex historical and contemporary environment within which any initiative is conducted and the potential impact and interaction any activity may have on that context (Donowitz, 2016). Put more plainly, a sensitivity to local context means that all policies, programs, solutions, and approaches should be tailored to the current and historic needs of the community and should be shaped by the community itself. Context sensitivity aims to understand the context in which a policy is operating to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts in that community (Handschin et al., 2016).

i. Empowerment and Inclusion:

A core characteristic of racist policies is exclusion. When Social Security was created in 1935, the Social Security Act excluded agricultural workers and domestic servants, positions held predominantly by Black, Mexican, and Asian workers (an example of *de facto* racism). The Wagner Act of 1935, which established the right to unionize, originally prohibited racial discrimination; yet the American Federation of Labor fought against that stipulation and the final version of the act allowed discrimination against “nonwhites” (an example of *de jure* racism). Across the country right now, states are implementing new voter restriction laws; in Georgia, some of these laws impose newer or more strict criminal penalties on election officials, introduce rigid voter identification requirements, limit the locations of drop boxes, shorten the window to apply for a mail-in ballot, and limit early voting (Brennan Center for Justice, 2021). Right now, 25% of Black voting-aged citizens in the US lack a current government-issued voter ID,

exemplifying how voter restriction laws like these can disproportionately impact communities of colors (Johnson and Feldman, 2021), thus perpetuating *de facto* racism.

Policies in the United States have historically relied on exclusion, resulting in differential impacts on different population groups and laying the groundwork for disempowerment. When there is no legal precedent for people's rights or safety, it makes it more difficult to participate in government and demand that your basic needs are met. Inclusion and empowerment are mutually reinforcing. Empowerment focuses on social mobilization, while social inclusion focuses on system-level institutional reform and policy change. While empowerment focuses on a "bottom-up" approach which enables individuals and communities to advocate for their needs and represent themselves, inclusion aims to build incentives and capacity within existing institutions so that these institutions can more effectively and equitably respond to the demands of *all* citizens (Bennett, 2002).

The "bottom-up" approach asserts that policy decisions are based on community needs and framed in a local context (Imperial, 2021). For "bottom-uppers," the understanding is that effective policy implementation is created when a policy interacts with and is influenced by the local setting, meaning that context matters and that local constituents have more democratic control over the policy and its intended outcomes (Imperial, 2021). A top-down approach, by contrast, is characterized by a central but distant body that makes decisions that are then "passed down" to lower levels of institutional power. Top-down policy approaches have been the predominant face of policy implementation in the United States. However, top-down policy implementation is prone to be hierarchical, generalized, and authoritarian. In the United States, this means that central (whether national or state) institutions have the power to create and implement policies that affect all people (deLeon and deLeon, 2002). But when an institution is already affected by structural, systematic, and historical bias, how can it accurately and equitably institute democratic change? The bottom-up approach is an important aspect of antiracist policy approach because it asks: what is most impactful for the community(s) you are trying to reach?

For example, in 2016 US presidential elections, for only the second time since 1964, the percentage of non-Hispanic white voters (73.3%) was not statistically different from the previous presidential election. This was in spite of the consistently observed year-to-year decrease of white voters as US population demographics are diversifying. 2016 was only the second election since 1964 where the total count of non-Hispanic Black voters decreased, from 12.9 percent in

2012 to 11.9 percent of total voter turnout in 2016 (US Census Bureau, 2021). During the 2016 election, Black voter turnout dropped by almost 6%, which is at least partly related to the lack of issue relevance for Black voters during the election (Igielnik & Budiman, 2020). It is important to note that political representation, such as during the 2012 election, which saw President Obama running for re-election, caused a concomitant surge in turnout and participation by Black voters (File, 2021). Overall, political participation among Black people increases when more Black candidates are elected to offices at all levels, local, state, and federal (McFayden, 2013). When communities experience empowerment, it is more likely that they will politically participate. In areas of high Black empowerment, for example, Black people should participate at rates equal to, or even greater than, white people. However, as we see with the outcomes of voter turnout in the 2016 election, when there is low Black empowerment, we see less participation in politics by Black constituents (Michener, 2018).

Empowerment is tied to political and community participation and inclusion. Empowerment occurs at multiple levels and encourages both individual participation and efficacy as well as power at the community or organizational level. The spirit of empowerment is that it cannot be given by others but is built by those who seek it (Laverack, 2006). While most research surrounding empowerment focuses on the intrapersonal level, the interactional, or community level is an important component of effective empowerment and inclusion. At the individual level, people may be a part of grassroots or local organizations and, participating this way, may feel more informed, involved, and efficacious. At the community level, large scale involvement and engagement reflects collective decision making and shared leadership that can leverage community wants and needs into political action (Perkins, 2010). In fact, citizen participation has been shown to be an integral factor in the development of empowerment in community contexts (Peterson & Reid, 2002). In a paper by Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988), findings showed that people who participated less in community activities experienced higher social isolation, alienation, and were ultimately less empowered (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Thus, a fundamental component of empowerment is community-based development, where collective power and efficacy are used to solve social problems and improve the conditions of communities (Perkins, 2010).

In the 1930s, communities across the nation felt the presence of an invisible red pen painting around and across their communities. Redlining, the discriminatory practice of denying

financial services to certain communities led to banks refusing to make loans for homes and businesses in Black and immigrant neighborhoods, and were fulfilling a cycle of neglect and neighborhood deterioration at the system and institutional levels (Federal Reserve, n.d.). When communities began to take notice of these discriminatory practices, many took it upon themselves to drive community-wide efforts to educate, organize, and mobilize. Greenlining campaigns, or consumer boycotts of neighborhood banks that participated in this discriminatory cycle, grew in number. Educational campaigns were launched to change the way bankers and investors might see these redlined areas. From these grassroots efforts grew a national “community reinvestment” movement that was so far reaching, that Congress ultimately sponsored two initiatives in response to the growing pressure. The Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) of 1975 and the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) of 1977. The HMDA gave community groups and university-based scholars access to data to investigate geographic and racial bias in lending. While the HMDA provided data to communities, the CRA was difficult to monitor and enforce from the federal level. Because of this, the structure of the CRA shifted from a top-down to a bottom-up approach, where communities were able to utilize the CRA to attract private investment in underfunded neighborhoods. Due to this shift, community groups were able to expose redlining and other structural, racist, and classist practices in their own communities and were able to negotiate with banks, create homeownership counseling programs, and fortify community outreach efforts that continue to include, empower, and benefit community residents (Dreier, 1996).

In the field of social work, empowerment has been identified as “the most influential method of social work when working with victims of discrimination” (Urh, 2014 and Thompson, 2002). Social work is an intrinsically political practice, and while it does not necessarily deal with policy, it does influence the political sphere. Humljan Urh identifies empowerment as a key principle of antiracist community social work; as such, political empowerment means facilitating the active, political participation of people who belong to marginalized groups (Urh, 2014). An integral part of empowerment is creating an “enabling” approach that uses inclusivity. This includes characteristics such as focusing on the views of the members of marginalized groups to identify community-wide solutions; positively valuing and accrediting these community members; advancing the awareness of marginalized people’s individual and community strengths; and using those strengths and their individual voices and experiences to create

community-wide solutions (Urh 2014). Ultimately, empowerment as an antiracist principal contributes to social inclusion of these marginalized populations. Through the consideration of empowerment and inclusion, policymakers can make steps towards antiracist policies, programs, and laws.

Empowerment is rooted in the “capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence, and hold accountable the institutions which affect them” (Bennett, 2002). For communities of color, immigrants, and religious and ethnic minorities, these capabilities are often muted or insufficient. Exclusion of these groups from political power results in barriers to political participation, citizenship, media, education, positions of power, housing, jobs, and capital and so on (Delanty et. al, 2008). Thus, for empowerment to occur, inclusion needs to happen simultaneously. The removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement and ongoing support and creation of incentives to increase the access for diverse individuals to assets and development opportunities *is* inclusion, and empowerment is when those groups and individuals can employ those assets. Empowerment requires securing civil and political rights, as well as economic, social, and cultural rights. When we address these barriers, we empower people and communities to build the knowledge and skills they need to act as agents of their own lives and their own political development (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2015)).

Empowerment has its roots in the capabilities of communities to hold accountable the institutions, and thus policies, that affect them. Therefore, empowering communities necessarily entails addressing the social, cultural, political, and economic determinants of their health and well-being. Empowering communities with a sensitivity to local context means fortifying community ownership and encouraging community action that is explicitly aimed at social and political change at the community level (World Health Organization, 2021).

Empowerment and inclusion at the local level, with sensitivity to local context, means looking at the history of the community, its constituents, their level of political participation, and their level of social inclusion. When empowerment structures are successfully implemented, they cannot be “standardized” across multiple populations but must be created within or adapted to local contexts; this means that empowerment strategies must consider local structural barriers and facilitators to empowerment interventions (Wallerstein N, 2006). Empowerment with sensitivity to local context can look like community-controlled project funding for community

initiatives, increased minority leaders and representatives that reflect local leadership such as religious leaders, improved voting participation, and increased institutional transparency and accountability (i.e. local institutions sharing expenditures, program investment, etc.) (Huff et. al, 2014).

When empowerment is done with a sensitivity to local context, it increases the community's skills and access to information and resources, promotes community action through collective involvement in decision-making and participation in all phases of planning; strengthens public policy solutions by transferring decision-making authority to participants in the community; and ultimately supports integrating community empowerment with national and regional policies to enhance the economic, political, and human rights opportunities for that specific community (Wallerstein N, 2006). An antiracist policymaker understands the roots of disempowerment and inequity lie in power and policy; therefore, an antiracist policy solution is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between different racial groups (Kendi, 2021). There cannot be a sensitivity to local context without understanding how a community can be empowered and constituents, especially those traditionally marginalized, can be included. Therefore, as policymakers apply the concepts of empowerment and inclusion in their formulation process, there must be sensitivity to local context.

Some questions to consider when integrating empowerment and inclusion into the policy formulation process include:

1. How are racial and ethnic minority communities actively engaged in the policy making process? How are local communities engaged in the policy formulation process?
2. How does the policy development process ensure authentic community voices and participation?
3. How is the policy formulation process accountable to the needs of the communities that will be affected by the policy?

ii. Targeted Universalism:

Universal policy strategies and targeted policy strategies often find themselves on separate ends of the political strategy spectrum. Those who favor a universal approach may believe that universal policies more effectively serve everyone, without a preference or discrimination toward group membership, status, income, race, or other factors. In contrast, those who favor a targeted approach may point out that specific populations need more or less help depending on the policy issue, and that this focused approach may yield more equitable benefits and outcomes. Targeted universalism aims to bridge the gap between these two approaches, focusing on the strongest attributes of both approaches while trying to minimize their weaknesses (Powell, 2019).

With targeted universalism, policy solutions are framed as universal goals with specific, targeted solutions. Targeted universalism does not aim to reach all people in the same way, but rather establish goals for all constituents, and identify several different ongoing strategies for different communities, groups, and people to get them to that goal (Powell, 2019).

John A. Powell coined the term targeted universalism to describe an approach that is “inclusive of the needs of both dominant and marginalized groups but pays particular attention to the situation of the marginalized group” (Powell et. al, 2019). A cornerstone of this concept is that problems that hurt a small portion of the population often spill over and hurt larger portions of the population (Powell, 2019). Thus, targeted universalism seeks “universal goals that can be achieved through targeted approaches” (Goins et al., 2019).

The Social Security Act, discussed earlier, is one of the first examples that “universalists” often point to. However, the Social Security Act began as a helpful tool for working white males. The Act was designed to create changes that would improve the conditions of white, able-bodied, working-aged men, and failed to consider many other population groups (Powell, 2019). Thus, this “universal” policy was actually *conditionally* universal, and exacerbated disparities among Black Americans, women, agricultural workers, and even the elderly. The benefits that emerged from the Social Security Act were also scaled by wage level; in an already discriminatory labor market, the actual received benefits of the program were conclusively unequal and disproportionate.

Another example of universal policies that fell short is the 2006 Massachusetts’ statewide universal health care law, colloquially known as “Romneycare.” The policy aimed to increase

healthcare coverage among the Massachusetts population and succeeded in raising health insurance coverage to 96% (Powell et. al, 2019). However, for Hispanic constituents in the state, the law did little to improve their coverage *or* their access: less than 80% of the Hispanic population were insured compared to 96% of the non-Hispanic white population; and for Hispanic groups with limited English proficiency, coverage rates were even lower (Maxwell et al., 2011). For universal policies, the benefits may be intended for all, and it may be harder for political groups to claim that there is “special treatment” for some and not others. Additionally, universal policies can bring us closer to goals that improve the health and privileges of all of us. But universal policies can be exclusionary, can worsen disparities, and, regardless of intentions, can be conditionally universal and, even with the best intentions, have unintended consequences. Without targeted strategies (*that specifically address systemic barriers for communities that have been historically marginalized and historically discriminated against*), we lose the potential for universal policies to bring us all closer to equitable outcomes.

On the other end of the spectrum are targeted policies. For example, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 requires equal treatment **and** accommodations for persons with disabilities, including accessible easements, entrances, seating, restrooms, and more. This targeted policy mandates equal treatment and accommodations be made by government, employers, and public entities (*U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1997*). Head Start, a program started in 1964 to serve the children of extremely poor families, is another example of a targeted program. Head Start targets young children in families with incomes below the federal poverty level, or those who were eligible for public assistance programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI). In states that only have targeted programs like Head Start (as opposed to a universal pre-K program, for example), over 50% of 4-years-olds in poverty are enrolled in at least one of those targeted programs (Barnett, 2010). While these types of policies have seen success, they often face political backlash, including inconsistent funding and support. Targeted programs are especially prone to political challenge when they target a political “outgroup,” or a group that is perceived socially as undeserving. Often, negative and false stereotypes about the outgroup undermine the policy’s support, and are framed as serving special interests, being exclusionary, or viewed as “zero-sum.” “Zero-sum” politics describe a situation where the advantages and wins of one group are paralleled by the disadvantages and losses by the other group (*U.S. Equal Employment*

Opportunity Commission, 1997). Additionally, faltering support and poor public image often result in decreased funding, poor public reception, and thus ineffective long-term results (Powell et al., 2009). Take social welfare programs, for example. While welfare programs target low-income families, the political rhetoric surrounding them often blames the victim for their life circumstances (i.e. “they should work harder”). Thus, targeted solutions are often targeted themselves for alienating some people, and are often re-packaged for broader appeal.

Targeted universalism, on the other hand, creates goals that should be met for all citizens, but doesn't limit the number of possible solutions or approaches that can be taken to meet those goals, and uses approaches that may target specific groups or people. Targeted universalism rejects one universal approach, which is likely to yield discriminatory effects. The structure of targeted universalism is sometimes referred to as “Equity 2.0” because it uses the commitment to a universal goal with diverse strategies to advance all people toward it (Powell, 2019). For example, recall the popular metaphor used to depict the difference between equality and equity: the fence that is obscuring the view of a baseball game for three bystanders. One person is tall enough to see over, one is just too short, and the third is shorter still. Equality would have us give each person a chair to stand on: everyone gets the same tool. However, now the tall person is too tall, the middle person may be able to see again, and the shortest one is still too short to see over. Equity would tell us that we give each person exactly what they need to see the game: the tall person may not get a box, the middle person may get one box, and the shortest person may get two or three boxes, depending how much height they need to see over the fence. However, targeted universalism asks “what is the ultimate goal?” The goal may be that “everyone can see the game,” and thus the ultimate strategy would be to remove the barriers instead of boosting an individual's height or replacing the barrier with something smaller or more transparent. Targeted universalism addresses such barriers by making structural changes that can ultimately remove the barrier, but may provide shorter-term fixes and structural support for people suffering under the barrier (such as providing the equitable chairs at first). Ultimately, however, the use of a shared universal goal instills a sense of shared ambitions and reinforces collective commitment and responsibility and raises the expectations and bar above what the more privileged group may already have to create universal improvement and achievement (Powell et. al, 2019).

In King County, Washington, targeted universalism is being used to advance racial equity by focusing on a meta-goal of “a King County where all people have equitable opportunities to

thrive.” The county began its work on its first-ever County Strategic plan in 2010, and in 2016 it launched a six-year Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan headed by its newly-created Office of Equity and Social Justice (Powell, 2019). The plan’s aim was to invest in communities and upstream interventions such as housing, transportation, health and human services, and the environment. The county realized that to achieve their goal, a targeted universalist approach would prove to be most effective. For example, in King County’s model, targeted universalism was used to effectively communicate the scope of the upcoming work, and assemble people, structures, and resources within the government to start enacting the strategic plan. Data were gathered and disaggregated to identify and define subgroups of the population with differing outcomes and the structural barriers that prevented equitable outcomes between these groups. Finally, universal goals were crafted as a standard for the entire county population; however, subsequent individual “pathways” were described, fortified, and presented to help identified subgroups find their own way to these goals. The strength of targeted universalism is its ability to move beyond race as a single focus of difference, and to create not only procedural equity but support transformative, institutional change through careful, considerate, though often slow processes. King County used targeted universalism to set goals for its Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan, while at the same time identifying and aligning sustainable short and long-term changes that are being actively pursued (Ake & Lam-Hine, 2018). One of their interventions has been a homeless monitoring system, that collects and disaggregate data to assess the equity of their approach. Their Coordinated Entry for All approach is successfully working toward a universal goal to make homelessness rare and non-recurring by using targeted strategies for specific communities across the county (*Regional Homelessness Data*, 2020).

Targeted universalism is gaining traction quickly among local, state, and national agencies. This is because targeted universalism allows a universal goal to be met with flexibility in approach. A critical part of its framework is that it addresses exclusion and marginalization by promoting belonging and shifting “outgroups” from the fringes of societal focus to the center of societal care, all while addressing the needs of the whole (Powell et. al, 2019). To create antiracist policies, we must first recognize that racism affects different communities differently, and that goals must have unique strategies and solutions that serve specific communities, populations, and subgroups (Ford et. al, 2010). While empowerment speaks to the ways that individuals and communities can cultivate and exercise their political will and power, targeted

universality speaks to the way institutions (like government) can give communities the tools to start the process. Because targeted universalism is an outcome-oriented strategy, it sets and achieves universal goals through transactional and transformative changes that prioritize the marginalized and benefit the collective (Powell, 2019). The cornerstone concept of dismantling existing power structures to reach these universal goals, with a specific focus on improving marginalized groups' power, status, and equity, is why this concept is central to antiracist policy work.

Targeted universalism also recognizes that universal goals must include local objectives. Without addressing the needs of specific communities and populations, a universal goal can never be met. Sensitivity to local context within the concept of targeted universalism means that when policies are developed, localities must inform how the overarching goal can be met in their community, and how the pathways toward achieving that goal should be translated consistent with local needs, culture, and values.

In practice, targeted universalism relies on simultaneously empowering and including marginalized groups. Because there are so many groups that are left out of the spheres of authority and decision making, the level of "community participation" or "engagement" must improve and exceed their traditional expectations (Powell, 2019). When decision makers assess the barriers and support systems that exist in a community, they are likely to produce a number of targeted strategies. However, an important aspect of local sensitivity as it pertains to a targeted universalist approach is the need for both disaggregated data (data that is broken into segments based on different population groups) and data that is community-relevant. Communities from which the data are collected must be an active part of defining the problem, identifying key measures and metrics, and designing the solution(s) (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). This also reflects *the importance of* listening to and understanding the lived experiences of individuals in the community, what solutions they need, and the way policy solutions may affect them (both the fourth tenet of Critical Race Theory and the characteristic of sensitivity to local context).

Assessing and understanding the systems and structures that may support or prevent a community from achieving a universal goal is perhaps the most critical step in a targeted universal framework. That is because the analysis of the problem and the accompanying data will directly shape the final solution(s). Disaggregated data are an important tool for achieving racial equity. For example, the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau statistics showed that more than half of

Asian Americans had a bachelor's degree or higher by the age of 25; however, when the data were disaggregated to focus on Southeast Asian Americans, it showed a different picture, where less than 15% of Cambodian Americans, 14% of Hmong Americans, and 26% of Vietnamese Americans had a bachelor's degree by age 25 (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). Disaggregated (population sub-group specific) data like these can help us understand what targeted objectives can help achieve better educational outcomes, as based in this example. The strategies that may work for this group (such as addressing financial barriers, language barriers, and even geographical barriers to educational access) may not work for others who may experience a different set of circumstances (such as affluent White men, who experience high rates of college admission). Additionally, disaggregated and visualized data can be a motivator for political and social participation among community members affected by these inequities. Community members who can clearly see and understand what the data are showing may be able to influence and formulate more specific strategies for improving an outcome for a specific subgroup, helping to move them closer to the universal goal (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2016). However, while data are an integral part of understanding where issues lie and can encourage communities and decisionmakers to ask other critical questions that might lead to answers, data alone doesn't necessarily present solutions. Disaggregated data are critical to targeting and assessing both targeted and universal outcomes, and should be used alongside community input and support.

Targeted universalism works by shifting “outgroups” from the edges of societal focus to the center to drive the universal goal we seek to achieve. It is also complementary to empowerment, inclusion, and sensitivity to local context in supporting an antiracist approach to policy development. This antiracist concept highlights that to combat racism, we must recognize that racism affects different communities in different ways, and that strategies to reach universal outcomes like education equity, housing access and affordability, and political inclusion must be tailored to the people and communities disproportionately impacted.

Some questions to consider for including targeted universalism in the policy formulation process are:

1. How are community needs, wants, and goals considered during the policy formulation process?

2. How does this policy create unique opportunities for targeted pathways and solutions to the problem?
3. How are disproportionately impacted communities captured and included in the data analysis process?

iii. Historical Context:

“Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” —**George Santayana**

“The world got along without race for the overwhelming majority of its history. The U.S. has never been without it.” —**David R Roediger**

From the beginning of United States’ history, the government has played a central role in creating, upholding, and perpetuating racism. These policies included immigration restrictions, voting restrictions, citizenship restrictions, and limitations on who can own property and who *was* property. Since the Revolutionary War, rights were often dependent on being white and male. Slavery in the United States existed for more than a century before 1776, and continued to be a standard practice of daily life in the South until the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865. For nearly 300 years, more than 12 million Africans were shipped as slaves to the Americas, with more than half a million brought to the United States. By 1860, the slave population in the US had grown to be more than four million (O’Neill, 2019).

American history is paradoxical in that its foundational belief in freedom parallels its belief in ownership and property. As European countries like Great Britain abolished slavery, the United States was slow to follow suit, and instead sought justifications for owning humans as property. Beliefs about the inferiority of certain races perpetuated by leading figures like Thomas Jefferson and John Locke helped to create the cornerstones of the United States’ culture of racism (National Museum of African American History & Culture, 2019). Today, the geographical distribution of the US Black population still mirrors its distribution before the Civil War. These factors and this history continue to influence policies and outcomes for Black Americans today (Hardy et al., 2018). Understanding the historical context of slavery, policy, race, and discrimination in the United States is an integral part of antiracist policy work;

otherwise, we run the risk of the not only repeating history, but perpetuating and exacerbating racist and harmful effects.

Racism has been a stubborn rock in the gears of achieving health equity and is a fundamental social determinant of health. Social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow up, live, work, and play. The social determinants of health framework is an effective public health model for demonstrating the causal pathways linking social factors to health outcomes. It is a framework that allows public health officials to understand the interwoven relationships between social factors such as housing, food security, educational attainment, and racism with health outcomes such as quality of life, disease prevalence, and more (American Public Health Association, 2021). Historical context is the history of policies, laws, and institutions and how they influence these social determinants. As a result, historical context has a wide range of effects on issues like health, quality of life, educational and employment outcomes, and more. Because of the powerful way in which this has impacted and perpetuated racism, historical context is a critical component of antiracist policy formulation.

Ibram X. Kendi, author of “Stamped from the Beginning,” states that racism does not stem primarily from hate and ignorance, but that “racist policies have driven the history of racist ideas in America” (Kendi, 2017). Race has been both present and illusive, an elephant in the room, when policy decisions are being made and policies are developed. As reflected in the earlier discussions, redlining and discriminatory lending practices left many families of color unable to buy homes in the past, leading to modern-day segregation, wealth disparities, and lower quality of life along racial lines in the United States. These historic redlining policies have resulted in perpetual housing discrimination, and today people of color looking to buy or rent homes are still told about fewer housing opportunities than white people (Greene et al., 2017). There are also continued policy consequences from the Supreme Court’s 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. In a study that reviewed trends and consequences of both racial and economic school segregation since *Brown*, evidence suggests that students appear to be more segregated now by income across schools and districts than in 1990 (Reardon & Owens, 2014). When policy decisions are made solely regarding the “problem at hand” without a specific consideration of structural and especially historical context, the results can lead to further exacerbating and perpetuating racial inequities.

Adopting an antiracist approach requires considering past policies, whether and how they were racist, and their differential impacts. A neutral approach or an approach that does not make that distinction is inherently dangerous because of the implicit and structural presence of racism in government in America. *De facto* racism has been an unfortunate legacy of policy and law. The lack of historical context in policies that impact the political mobility and freedom of historically marginalized and disenfranchised groups fails to dismantle or actively oppose the racist effects of past or modern policies. Too often, public policy researchers and decision makers ignore the historical context of existing racist structures. For example, how does one build public housing in an equitable way, knowing that poverty and lack of accessibility to housing is felt disproportionately by non-white communities without considering the past affects of the National Housing Act of 1949? Without an understanding of how past *de facto* or *de jure* racism impacted racial political or health equity, it is impossible to engage in antiracist political work (Brown et. al, 2009). America's dominant cultural narrative centers itself around white men, and portrays a history that speaks to progress, innovation, and freedom. For communities of color, racial, religious, and ethnic minorities, this narrative blames marginalized groups instead of holding institutions accountable (Loury, 2019). This narrative paints modern and persistent problems like poverty and crime as a characteristic of race, poor choices, and behavioral patterns as opposed to historical and continued discrimination. The disregard of Black Codes, Jim Crow, anti-immigration laws and their aggregated effects on subsequent policies and outcomes became regular practice (Rothstein, 2018). However, the historical context of racial disparities is evident in every domain: health, homeownership, educational attainment, criminal justice, and more. This is because policies, not choices or behaviors, explain these contrasting outcomes between historically supported groups like white men, and historically disenfranchised and dehumanized people of color (Spievack & Okeke, 2020).

Historical context is difficult to separate from local context. The way communities form, their needs, and the way they have been affected by policies and institutions creates their historical and local contexts simultaneously. In the context of American history, locality matters when it comes to racism. Racism and slavery were a rampant part of Southern culture for the formative years of America's history, and the resulting policies (i.e. Jim Crow and segregation) make the consideration of historical laws and policies an essential part of antiracist policy formulation. However, geographic location is often inseparable when it comes to important

policy decisions. For example, housing policies that address housing affordability and availability must focus on their geographic location and the needs of the local population. In the case of a city like Birmingham, racism has pushed Black communities out of the heart of city, annexed entire portions of historical Black communities, and has failed to include these considerations in its modern policy and decision making (Hariharan et al., 2020). In Atlanta, rapid gentrification due to new construction along the BeltLine has been framed as “redevelopment,” and has garnered political and fiscal support from city officials. However, researchers have noted that this redevelopment has allowed white homeowners and political leaders to deflect accusations of racism by stressing positive aspects of gentrification such as walkability, mixed-income living, and business revitalization. Yet, evidence shows that the neighborhoods being targeted for this redevelopment are primarily those with the highest concentrations of low-income Latinx and Black residents (Lanari, 2019). These residents’ historical relationship with where they live has everything to do with “white flight” that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s which left primarily minority (Black) residents within city limits while more affluent white families fled to suburbs outside the city perimeter (Delmelle, 2017). While these are primarily historical considerations, it is impossible to separate them from their local context. Ultimately, where a policy is enacted matters, due to both modern barriers and historical policies and existing inequities. Sensitivity to local context is about being attentive to the needs of communities in the context of their larger history.

Some questions to consider regarding historical context in the policy formulation process include:

1. How does the policy development process address existing and historical policies that have created or perpetuate racism?
2. How are considerations about potential negative impacts on historically disadvantaged communities being included in the policy development process?
3. How are community concerns related to existing or historical policies being addressed?
4. How is the history of the community considered during the policy formulation process?

“We know that the generational theft of the descendants of slaves is a part of why everything from housing to education to health to employment basically puts us in two different countries.”—**Mayor Pete Buttigieg**

“[Racism] is not just an issue that started yesterday... We have systemic racism that’s eroding our nation from health care to the criminal justice system.”—**Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ)**

Table 1.0: Summary of Concepts and Characteristics of Antiracist Policy Formulation

Concept	Empowerment and Inclusion	Targeted Universalism	Historical Context
Definition	<p><u>Empowerment:</u> The capabilities of diverse individuals and groups to engage, influence, and hold accountable the institutions which affect them.</p> <p><u>Inclusion:</u> The removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement and ongoing support and creation of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals to assets and development opportunities</p>	<p><u>Targeted Universalism:</u> A framework where policy solutions are framed as universal goals with <i>specific, targeted</i> solutions. An approach that is “inclusive of the needs of both dominant and marginalized groups but pays particular attention to the situation of the marginalized group”</p>	<p><u>Historical Context:</u> The history of policies, laws, and institutions and how it influences the conditions and environments where people are born, grow up, live, work, and play.</p>
Considerations + Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How were racial and ethnic minority communities actively engaged in the policy making process? How were local communities engaged in the policy formulation process? 2. How did the policy development process ensure authentic community voices and participation? 3. How is the policy formulation process accountable to the needs of the communities that will be affected by the policy? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How were community needs, wants, and goals considered during the policy formulation process? 2. How does this policy create unique opportunities for targeted pathways and solutions to the problem? 3. How were disproportionately impacted communities captured and included in the data analysis process? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How does the policy development process address existing and historical policies that have created or perpetuate racism? How are considerations about potential negative impacts on historically disadvantaged communities being included in the policy development process? 2. How are community concerns related to existing or historical policies being addressed? 3. How was the history of the community considered during the policy formulation process?
Sensitivity to Local Context	<p>Sensitivity to local context is defined as a context-sensitive approach: understanding the complex historical and contemporary environment within which any policy is developed and the potential impact and interaction of the policy on that context. Through consideration the the local context, policymakers begin to see and understand the stories, lived experiences, and realities of the communities they are impacting through policy development.</p> <p><u>Aim:</u> To understand the context in which a policy will be operating, to ensure community voice in the policy process, and to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts to that community.</p>		

Conclusion:

Antiracist policy formulation builds on concepts already being used to address structural and systemic racism. Integral to this process is the groundwork already laid down by important frameworks like Critical Race Theory and models that apply a health or racial equity lens. Incorporating these newly refined antiracist concepts into policy formulation should not be done in isolation, but mindful of and in the context of existing frameworks. The goal of this paper is to shine a light on additional concepts that can further advance the work of policy and public health officials to bring us closer to policies that meaningfully breakdown systems and structures that perpetuate racism and advance racial and health equity.

Empowerment and inclusion, targeted universalism, and historical context together with sensitivity to local context are concepts that all policy makers should consider during policy formulation. Without these explicit considerations, policies run the risk of missing key factors critical to advancing equity and continuing to perpetuate both *de jure* and *de facto* racism. The questions posed in each section encourage thoughtful consideration of how these concepts can be incorporated by policymakers at any level to support thoughtful, considerate, and antiracist policy creation. Advancing antiracism and deconstructing racist policies will require use of all available tools.

“Saturate the body politic with the chemotherapy or immunotherapy of antiracist policies that shrink the tumors of racial inequities, that kill undetectable cancer cells. Remove any remaining racist policies, the way surgeons remove the tumors. Ensure there are clear margins, meaning no cancer cells of inequity left in the body politic, only the healthy cells of equity. Encourage the consumption of healthy foods for thought and the regular exercising of antiracist ideas, to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence. Monitor the body politic closely, especially where the tumors of racial inequity previously existed. Detect and treat a recurrence early, before it can grow and threaten the body politic.” —**Ibram Kendi, How to be Antiracist**

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