



“This analysis is direct about confronting the ineffectiveness of our current practices, our policies, and our procedure. It is a bold step to address the root causes that lead to racial disparities.”

- Supervisor Sheila Stubbs, Dane County, WI

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**Advancing
Racial Equity &
Transforming
Government**

Government
Alliance on
Race and Equity

1. USE A SHARED RACIAL EQUITY FRAMEWORK

ACROSS THE UNITED STATES, race can be used to predict one's success. Deep and pervasive inequities exist across all indicators for success, including jobs, housing, education, health, and criminal justice. Taking a “color-blind” approach has not helped. In order for us to achieve equitable outcomes, it is necessary for us to understand the underlying drivers of inequity.

Talking about race in our society can be difficult, but it doesn't have to be the case. Much of the challenge exists because we do not have a common understanding or shared definitions.

There are four main concepts that are critical for shared understanding:

- A. Historical role of government laws, policies and practices in creating and maintaining racial inequities
- B. A definition of racial equity and inequity
- C. The difference between explicit and implicit bias
- D. The difference between individual, institutional, and structural racism

A. Historical Role of Government in Creating and Maintaining Racial Inequities

From the beginning of the formation of the United States, government played an instrumental role in creating and maintaining racial inequities. Through decisions about who could gain citizenship, who could vote, who could own property, who was property, and who

could live where, governments at all levels have influenced distribution of advantage and disadvantage in American society. Early on in US history, rights were defined by whiteness. As an example, the first immigration law of the newly formed United States, the Naturalization Act of 1790, specified that only “whites” could become naturalized citizens (*Takaki, 1998*).

While the definition of race in American society was formed around the divide between whites and African Americans in the context of slavery, Native Americans as well as Asians and other immigrant groups came to be defined racially as non-white, maintaining a binary between those who enjoy the privileges of whiteness and those who are seen as undeserving of such privileges (*Kilty 2002*).

Even legislation that on its surface appeared to be race neutral, providing benefits to all Americans, has often had racially disproportionate impact, as evidenced by the examples below.

The **National Housing Act of 1934** was ostensibly passed to improve the lot of those who otherwise might not be able to afford to own a home, but the way it was implemented using a neighborhood grading system (now known as redlining) that labeled minority neighborhoods as too unstable for lending resulted in entrenched segregation and benefits largely only accrued to white families (*Jackson 1985*).

Another New Deal policy, the **National Labor Relations Act of 1935**, excluded agricultural and domestic employees as a compromise with Southern Democrats (*Perea 2011*). While the

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History of Government and Race

Initially explicit

Government explicitly creates and maintains racial inequity

Became implicit

Discrimination illegal, but “race neutral” policies and practices perpetuate inequity.

Current opportunity: government for racial equity

Proactive polices, practices and procedures that advance racial equity

law was written in “race-neutral” language, the predominance of African Americans in these occupations created disparities in labor protection that exist to this day, as these jobs remain largely held by people of color and have never been incorporated into the NLRA.

The **Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944**, also known as the **GI Bill**, is often credited for helping to build the modern American middle class. While this program did not include explicit racial language, there were significant disparities in its impact (Herbold, 1994–95). Tuition benefits were theoretically offered to African American veterans, but largely could not be used where they were excluded from white colleges, and space was not made available in overcrowded African American colleges. Banks and mortgage agencies refused loans to African Americans, and when African Americans refused employment at wages below subsistence level, the Veterans Administration was notified and unemployment benefits were terminated. As an example of the uneven impact of the GI Bill, of the 3,229 GI Bill guaranteed loans for homes, businesses, and farms made in 1947 in Mississippi, only two loans were offered to African American veteran applicants (Katznelson 2006).

In response to the many acts of government that created racial disparities and exclusion,

both explicitly and in effect, the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s put pressure on government to address inequity. These new laws include the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* that judged school segregation unconstitutional; the **Civil Rights Act of 1964**, which prohibited discrimination based on race, color, sex, religion, or national origin and desegregated public facilities; and the **Voting Rights Act of 1965**, which made racial discrimination in voting illegal.

Following the victories achieved during the Civil Rights movement, many overtly discriminatory policies became illegal, but racial inequity nevertheless became embedded in policy that did not name race explicitly, yet still perpetuated racial inequalities.

The New Deal and GI Bill policies described above showcase how even before civil rights legislation became the law of the land, policy makers had found ways to accommodate those who benefit from continued racial disparities while appealing to broader American ideals of fairness and equality.

Now, with a growing movement of government leaders examining the racial impacts of public policy on their communities, there is tremendous opportunity for the development of proactive policies, practices, and procedures that advance racial equity. We are seeing a growing

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field of practice of local and regional governments working to advance racial equity in a variety of realms, from internal hiring policies to criminal justice reform to education and workforce development.

B. A Definition of Racial Equity and Inequity

Equality and equity are sometimes used interchangeably, but actually convey significantly different ideas. Equity is about fairness, while equality is about sameness. We are not interested in “closing the gaps” by equalizing sub-par results. When systems and structures are not working well, they are often not working well for most people. Although they might work a little bit better for white people than for people of color, when they are broken, improvements work to the benefit of all groups.

Racial equity means that race can't be used to predict success, and we have successful systems and structure that work for all.

What matters are the real results in the lives of people of color, not by an abstract conception that everyone has equal opportunity. As the historical examples above show, barriers to success attainment go far beyond whether the law contains explicit racial exclusion or discrimination. Because of the inter-generational impacts of discrimination and continued disparities due to implicit bias, policies must be targeted to address the specific needs of communities of color. This means that sometimes different groups will be treated differently, but for the aim of eventually creating a level playing field that currently is not the reality.

C. The Difference between Explicit and Implicit Bias

We all carry bias, or prejudice. Bias can be understood as the evaluation of one group and its members relative to another. Acting on biases can be discriminatory and can create negative outcomes for particular groups.

In its 2013 annual review, the Kirwan Institute defined implicit bias as, “attitudes or stereo-

types that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.” Much of the literature suggests that these biases are activated unconsciously, involuntarily, and/or without one’s awareness or intentional control” (*Kirwan Institute, 2013*). These attitudes are often outside the consciousness of an individual and are often acted upon involuntarily. Individuals may be unaware that they possess these potentially unfavorable opinions and fail to connect these unconscious biases to their actions.

Unconscious biases are created through historical legacies and life experiences and influences from other individuals, but are difficult to pinpoint where they were actually developed. While expressions of explicit bias are no longer deemed acceptable in most of American society and, as a result, have declined significantly over the past half-century, implicit bias has been shown to be persistent and widespread (*Blair et al. 2011*).

Implicit bias increases the difficulty in perceiving and resolving the existence of racial inequality. The “Implicit Association Test” (IAT), pioneered by Greenwald, McGhee, and Schwartz, is a helpful tool for measuring bias and revealing the extent to which we all hold biases without realizing it. Understanding the predictability and unconsciousness of racial bias can help government employees recognize the effect their individual actions and institutional policies have on racial inequity if not addressed through intentional change efforts.

EXAMPLES OF IMPLICIT BIAS IMPACT

In 1970, female musicians made up 5 percent of all players in the top five symphony orchestras in the US, but are 25 percent today. Research has shown that 25–46 percent of the increase can be explained by the use of “blind” auditions—auditions that happen behind a screen so that the conductor cannot see the identity of the auditioner (*Goldin and Rouse, 1997*).

Researchers responded to fictitious resumes for help-wanted ads in Boston and Chicago newspapers, assigning each resume to either a very “African American-sounding” name or a very “white-sounding” name. Resumes with ostensibly white names garnered 50 percent more callbacks than the African Ameri-

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Explicit Bias	Implicit Bias
Expressed directly	Expressed Indirectly
Aware of bias	Unaware of bias
Operates consciously	Operates Unconsciously
E.g. Sign in the window of an apartment building—“We don’t rent to_____.”	E.g. A property manager doing more criminal background checks on African Americans than on whites.

can-sounding names, which occurred across occupations and industries (Bertrand and Mullainathan, 2003). Further, for the names deemed white, a higher-quality resume elicited 30 percent more callbacks whereas for African Americans, it elicited a far smaller increase.

In a similar study, teachers are more likely to label a student with multiple disciplinary incidents a troublemaker if the student has an African American-sounding name, without knowing the student, and only seeing the name on the record (Okonofua and Eberhardt, 2015).

In an analysis of over 600 capital cases in Philadelphia between 1979 and 1999 involving an African American defendant, researchers found that the more stereotypically “Black” a defendant is perceived to be, the more likely that person is to be sentenced to death, but only if the victim is white (Eberhardt, 2006).

WHAT TO DO ABOUT BIAS?

Several studies have found that when attention is paid to the source of an implicit bias that may be affecting one’s judgment, the effects of that intervention can be reduced or avoided (Greenwald and Banaji, 1995).

In a 12-week longitudinal study, people who received the intervention showed dramatic reductions in implicit race bias (Devine et al., 2012). People who were concerned about discrimination or who reported using the strategies showed the greatest reductions. The intervention also led to increases in concern about discrimination and personal awareness of bias over the duration of the study. People in the control group showed none of the above effects. In addition, focusing on areas of inequity allows institutions to develop intervention strategies. “Blind auditions” or remov-

ing names from resumes is an example of an institutional strategy to address implicit bias.

D. The Difference between Individual, Institutional, and Structural Racism

Part of the anxiety around talking about race can be attributed to the idea of racism at the individual level. “Racial anxiety,” according to The Perception Institute, refers to “the heightened levels of stress and emotion that we confront when interacting with people of other races. People of color experience concern that they will be the subject of discrimination and hostility. white people, meanwhile, worry that they will be assumed to be racist. Studies have shown that interracial interaction can cause physical symptoms of anxiety and that our non-verbal behaviors—making eye contact, using welcoming gestures or a pleasant tone of voice, for example—can be affected as well. When everyone in a conversation is anxious that it will turn negative, it often does. This causes a kind of feedback loop where the fears and anxieties of both white people and people of color are confirmed by their everyday interactions.

Recognizing the different forms racism can take is important for us to bring about change. When we recognize that racism operates at the individual, institutional, and structural level, we can move beyond individual anxiety and focus on institutional and structural change.

The following definitions of each help to set shared vocabulary to talk about racism with the level of specificity that is required to have productive conversations about race and how to work together to promote racial equity.

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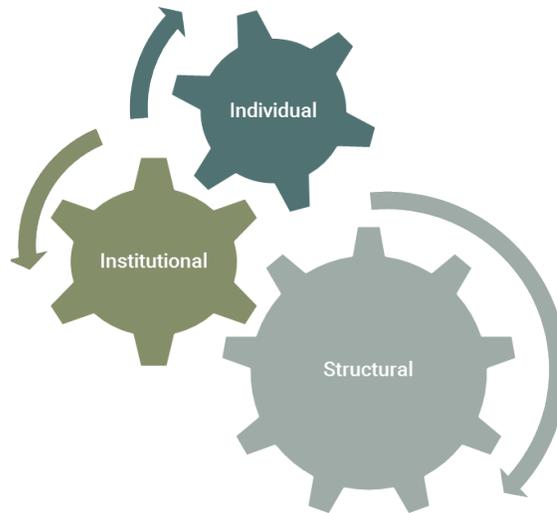
Individual racism—The room we’re all sitting in, our immediate context. Individual racism is pre-judgment, bias, or discrimination by an individual based on race. Individual-level racism includes both internalized racism—our private beliefs and biases about race and racism that are influenced by our culture—as well as interpersonal racism, which occurs between individuals when we interact with others and our private racial beliefs affect our public interactions (*Race Forward* 2014). Internalized racism can take expression as prejudice toward others, internalized sense of inferiority experienced by people of color, and beliefs about superiority or entitlement by white people.

Institutional racism—The building this room is in, the policies and practices that dictate how we live our lives. Institutional racism includes policies, practices and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally or inadvertently.

Institutional racism occurs within institutions and organizations such as schools, businesses, and government agencies that adopt and maintain policies that routinely produce inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people (*Race Forward* 2014). For example, a school system that concentrates people of color in the most overcrowded schools, the least-challenging classes, and taught by the least-qualified teachers, resulting in higher dropout rates and disciplinary rates compared with those of white students.

Structural racism—The skyline of buildings around us, all of which interact to dictate our outcomes. Structural racism encompasses a history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color. Structural racism is racial bias among interlocking institutions and across society, causing cumulative and compounding effects that systematically advantage white people and disadvantage people of color (*Race Forward* 2014, *Lawrence* 2004).

This structural level of racism refers to the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies that work together to



perpetuate inequity. An example is the racial disproportionality in the criminal justice system. The predominance of depictions of people of color as criminals in mainstream media, combined with racially inequitable policies and practices in education, policing, housing and others combine to produce this end result. And while some institutions play a primary responsibility for inequitable outcomes, such as school districts and disproportionate high school graduation rates, the reality is that there are many other institutions that also impact high school graduation rates, such as health care, criminal justice, human services, and more.

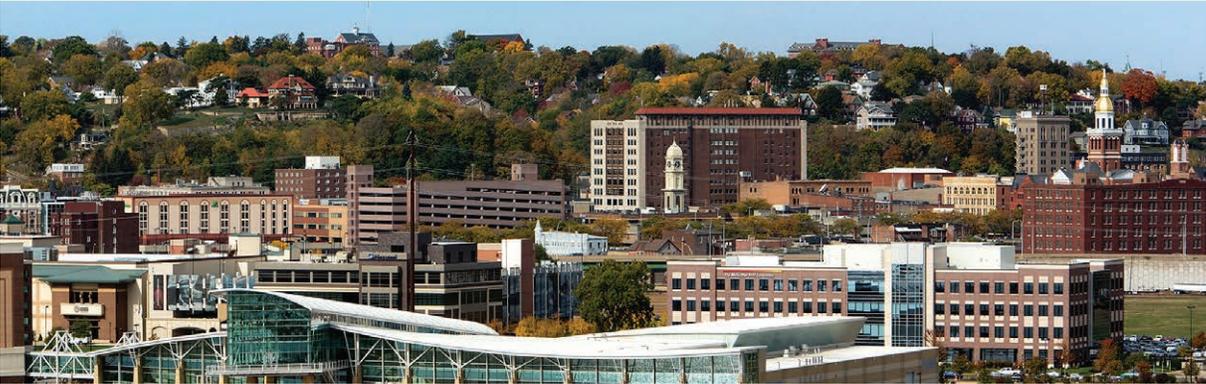
ONCE THERE IS AN understanding that a shared analysis is imperative to developing and implementing a strategy towards addressing racial equity, jurisdictions need to determine ways to achieve this shared analysis. In the spotlights that follow, you will find examples of how developing and using a shared analysis of racial equity has played an important role in practice.

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SPOTLIGHT ON Dubuque, Iowa



Intentional work to address organizational change around diversity and inclusion began in Dubuque, Iowa in 2006 with an organizational assessment and capacity-building to increase understanding and develop and implement institutional strategies that advance racial equity. This was carried out with the help of an outside consultant using an intercultural communication approach. Scenario-based workshops using adult learning principles were implemented with all government workers, focusing on cultural communication and conflict styles and introducing tools to assist employees in developing their personal skills. The training reduced defensiveness, established a common language, and empowered employees with an alternate narrative and tools to develop shared understanding in order to more successfully navigate deep cultural differences. This training is still given to all government employees, as well as many members of the community who have become ambassadors in the community.

Work inside the city has been supplemented by work in the community with the creation of Inclusive Dubuque in 2013. Currently, its focus is both internal and external. For example, internally, a cross-departmental recruitment and retention team is working to recruit a more diverse applicant pool. Externally, the focus has been largely on capacity-building with local non-profit organizations and the Dubuque Community School District and developing a community-wide Equity Profile.

Inclusive Dubuque

Inclusive Dubuque is a community network of leaders committed to supporting an equitable and inclusive culture to meet the economic and cultural needs of a diverse community. It is comprised of faith, labor, education, non-profit, and government leaders. The vision is a community where all individuals feel respected, valued, and engaged. Inclusive Dubuque network partners have funded roles at the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque, which serves as a hub for data and communication. Inclusive Dubuque is currently creating a Community Equity Profile, with the goal of increasing understanding of Dubuque's population not only around race, but also gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and more.

The Equity Profile will provide a snapshot of how diverse populations are affected by societal systems in Dubuque. The particular focus areas include economic well-being, housing, health, education, neighborhood safety, transportation, and arts and culture. The research for the Equity Profile will be completed in 2015 and includes quantitative population level data, community surveys, community dialogue sessions to share experiences, and meetings with focus area specialists.

To Learn More

Inclusive Dubuque (includedbq.org)
Community Foundation of Dubuque (www.dbqfoundation.org)

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SPOTLIGHT ON

Saint Paul, Minnesota

Mayor Chris Coleman launched the City of Saint Paul’s racial equity work after being inspired by Valeria Silva, the city’s district superintendent of schools. Superintendent Silva brought to the Mayor’s attention that while Saint Paul was a majority white city, white students made up only 28% of the public school population in the public schools in the city. The school district had been working for a year with Pacific Educational Group when Superintendent Silva invited the Mayor and County Manager, elected officials and senior staff to attend a two-day joint racial equity training. This led to the formation of a three-jurisdiction racial equity leadership group that continues today. The Mayor, along with Ramsey County administration, committed their jurisdictions to deepen their respective racial equity efforts.

Due to the initial focus on schools, the city started bringing together departments serving youth: Parks, Library, and Police—with supporting departments including Human Resources, Human Rights & Equal Economic Opportunity, and the Mayor’s Office. The Mayor’s Office organized a series of “Beyond Diversity” sessions with department heads, learning about personal biases, and examining how racial equity issues play out in their current work. The city is focusing on internal operations, recognizing the impact of internal operations on racially disparate outcomes in the community.

In 2015, Mayor Coleman directed all departments to develop annual racial equity plans. Departments are focusing on their own lines of business, improving data collection and the ability to disaggregate data, and using a Racial Equity Assessment Tool to examine key policy, procedure and service decisions. Departments are also developing Racial Equity Change teams.

Mayor Coleman has set a goal that by end of his term on December 31, 2017, all 3,000 employees will have participated in foundational racial equity training. To date, 90% of 500 supervisors have been trained and the response has been positive. A new one-day foundational training was launched in late summer 2015 to all city departments and will be led by a team of trained City staff. Saint Paul Police Department will be training its staff using complementary training module that is customized for police departments. Saint Paul is employing a “train the trainer” approach so that internal expertise is built across departments.

Finally, the City’s Emerging Leaders have launched a project to develop a portfolio of tools, case studies and recommendations for deeper and more inclusive community engagement in city operations and policy-making. The six-person team is interviewing racial equity leads from other cities, as well as local community organizations, to inform their recommendations to the Mayor for ways

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to improve community participation in shaping policy and programs. The Mayor, school district, and Ramsey County have continued to collaborate publicly on issues of racial equity. The three jurisdictional leaders meet monthly on education, racial equity and youth issues, and a broader group of jurisdictional leaders meet three times annually for training and shared learning. Although each jurisdiction is at a different stage of its work and they do not always share a common language or framework, the shared learning sessions have built trust and knowledge based on a shared vision of and commitment to racial equity. This has played out in several episodes in the past year where the school district and superintendent have been challenged for their changes to disciplinary policies, mainstreaming Emotional Behavioral Disability and English Language Learner students, and realigning resources more equitably across schools. The Mayor has been a strong, public voice in support of the Superintendent, as have county staff and elected officials. The three partners have developed a strong collaboration on racial equity.

Saint Paul staff believe that a key factor in the progress the city of Saint Paul has made is due to Mayor Coleman's leadership. With a strong-mayor system of governance, Mayor Coleman has been able to make racial equity a priority and implement that priority city-wide.

To Learn More:

City of Saint Paul, contact jane.eastwood@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

Saint Paul Public Schools Office of Equity (<http://equity.spps.org/>)

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