
Dismantling Structural Racism: A Racial Equity Theory of Change

Background

The Roundtable has developed a process for crafting a *Theory of Change* (TOC) for communities that are planning new initiatives, or articulating theories for programs that are already in existence. This is a “backward mapping” process to define the intermediate and early requirements for achieving a desired long term change. It allows reformers to answer the simple, yet crucial question: “What will it really take for us to achieve the long term change we want?”

Backwards mapping is pursued to sketch out an adequate set of intermediate and early requirements for achieving long term change. While it is always hard to know what is “adequate,” planners should generally stop working backwards when they have reached the step that makes sense to them as an early goal for their work.

This document blends “theory of change” logic with a *Structural Racism* (SR) analysis. In so doing, it offers a methodology for designing initiatives that promote *racial equity*. We call this methodology a Racial Equity Theory of Change.

What is a Racial Equity Theory of Change?

The Racial Equity Theory of Change (RETOC) is a step-by-step guide for defining what is needed to change a specific racial disparity outcome in a given context. By setting long-term change targets and identifying the early and intermediate requirements or benchmarks that are logically associated with those targets, it “unpacks” a change process and identifies specific challenges and barriers that must be addressed.

The basic premise of the RETOC is that chronic racial gaps in important opportunity areas like education, employment, housing, and healthcare, are strongly associated with *structural racism*.

Structural Racism is:

A shorthand term for the many systemic factors that work to produce and maintain racial inequities in America today. These are aspects of our history and culture that allow the privileges associated with “whiteness” and the disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt within the political economy. Public policies, institutional practices and cultural representations are shaped by structural racism to reproduce outcomes that are racially inequitable.

