Injustice is Ahistorical: A Case Study of St. Louis

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Abstract: *The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the importance of historical context in social work practice, research, and teaching. Understanding the evolution of racist policies and practices is necessary for developing antiracist practices that promote racial equity. Using St. Louis as a case study, the manuscript describes how racist policies and practices evolved over time between the 1900s and 1970s. These policies and practices will be examined at three levels: individual, local governance, and federal policy. The discussion section describes the implications of this history for contemporary social work research, practice, and education. In practice, understanding our history is necessary so we can identify when we are using racialized practices and hoping for different results. Understanding the historical context of our research can identify when our results provide support that racist policies and practices are working as designed. The interconnectedness of racist policy and practice necessitates re-thinking social work education, particularly as it relates to the divide of micro and macro social work practice.*

Keywords*: St. Louis; antiracism; history; racism; social work*

Antiracist practice values not only teaching about and addressing oppressive systems in the present day, but also understanding the historical development of these systems (Kendi, 2016, 2023). Failing to learn from the history of racist policies and practices will at best limit the effectiveness of social work practice. At worst, it will cause social workers to perpetuate racial inequality. As Kendi (2023) suggests, there is no such thing as being "not racist"—there is only racist and antiracist. Not teaching history to social workers perpetuates racism in our profession. Thus, it is necessary for social work to not only teach that systems of oppression exist, but also how they have evolved over time in order to create equitable practices that create a more just world (Uehara et al., 2013).

This manuscript provides a brief overview of how racist policies and practices affected racial segregation in St. Louis between 1900s and the 1970s. These policies and practices will be examined at three different levels: individual, local government, and federal policy. The manuscript is not meant to be an exhaustive discussion on racist policy and practice in St. Louis (see Johnson, 2020 or Kendi, 2016; Rothstein, 2017 for in-depth accounts of St. Louis and the United States respectively). Rather, the purpose of the paper is to use St. Louis as a case study to show why social work needs to root contemporary research, practice, and education in historical context.

St. Louis: Overview

Given the unique geopolitical environment of St. Louis, it is important to first discuss terminology that plays a key role in racist policy and practice. The first is that St. Louis City and St. Louis County are two distinct counties (Johnson, 2020). The shaded area in Figure 1 is St. Louis County whereas the teardrop shaped area between St. Louis County and the Mississippi River is St. Louis City (also known as St. Louis City County). The dotted lines in St. Louis City represent the Central Corridor, a

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roughly one-mile-wide strip that contains major attractions and amenities including Forest Park, major hospitals and universities, downtown St. Louis, and the mayor's office. The Central Corridor is also home to the Central West End, a historically wealthy area in St. Louis City (Mallach, 2020).

Figure 1. Map of St. Louis City and St. Louis County

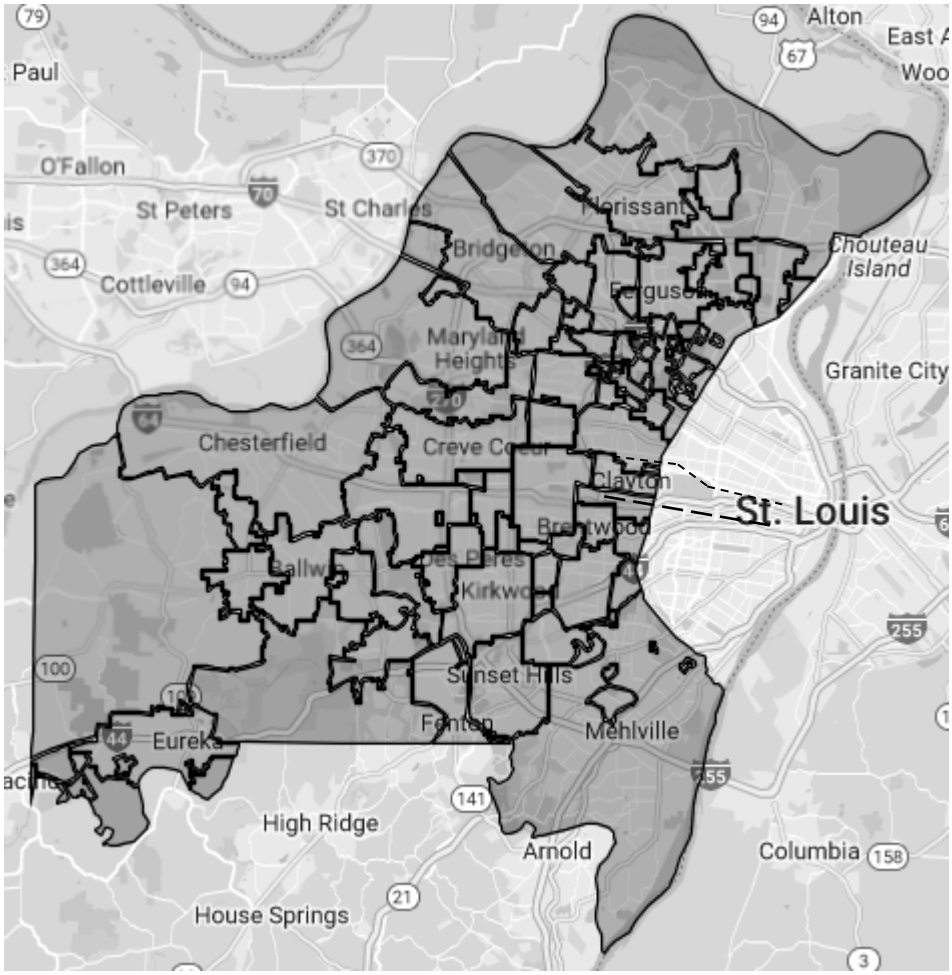

Figure created using google maps

Though not a formal municipal border, the Central Corridor divides North City and South City. The northern border of the Central Corridor is Delmar Boulevard, a highly publicized symbol of racial segregation in St. Louis and the country (Rigel Hines, 2019). As represented by the municipal borders in Figure 1, the City-County divide resulted in massive suburbanization and institutional fragmentation within St. Louis County (Swanstrom, 2019). The following sections will highlight how the fragmentation between St. Louis City and County, North City and South City, as well as within St. Louis County are key drivers of racial segregation in the region (Swanstrom, 2019). Early segregation efforts focused on concentrating Black residents in North St. Louis City. As the power behind segregation weakened, segregationist efforts were aimed at preventing the expansion of Black residents into St. Louis

County. Eventually, these efforts evolved into attempts to limit Black residents' home ownership to North St. Louis County.

St. Louis Racial Segregation 1900s-1970s

The Role of Individuals

Discussions of racial zoning, racism, and segregation tend to focus on specific individuals or groups. Narrowing the focus of racism to select individuals minimizes how common racist beliefs were among the general public (Jeffries, 2019). Racist sentiments may not have been universal among St. Louisans. However, the examples discussed in this section demonstrate that racist beliefs among individuals were both prevalent and persuasive in terms of establishing and maintaining racial segregation in the region.

Zoning ordinances played a key role in driving racial segregation across the United States, including in St. Louis (Rothstein, 2017). For example, a racially exclusive zoning ordinance in St. Louis stated that Black individuals could not buy a home on a block that was at least 75% White (Johnson, 2020). Geographically, these ordinances zoned Black residents into neighborhoods located almost exclusively in North City and North County (Gordon, 2008). In many cities, such ordinances were created by elected officials. However, St. Louis' racial zoning is relevant to a discussion of the importance of individuals in promoting segregation because zoning ordinances were enacted by voters through popular referenda (Johnson, 2020). Thus, racially exclusive zoning ordinance was developed by people, successfully circulated via petition, and the majority of voters approved racial segregation in the voting booth.

The Supreme Court of the United States ruled that racially exclusive zoning was unconstitutional in *Buchanan v. Warley* (1916). In response, the real estate industry in St. Louis promoted segregation through realtors' agreements. A precursor to racial steering, realtors agreed to show homes in certain neighborhoods to potential homebuyers of a specific race (Rothstein, 2017). Though realtors' agreements covered a slightly larger geographic area for Black prospective homebuyers compared to racial zoning ordinances, realtors' agreements still concentrated Black residents in North City (Gordon, 2008).

Restrictive covenants, a practice where homeowners stipulated in their deed whether Black people were excluded from purchasing the property, were another powerful tool for reinforcing segregation through the real estate market. For example, a 1940 area description of Ferguson, Missouri, conducted by the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC, 1940), concluded that Ferguson "Is restricted to prohibit residence of Negroes in its limits" (B-27). Although Ferguson did not have a municipal ordinance restricting home ownership to Whites, restrictive covenants were so common in Ferguson that the HOLC reviewer assumed there was a blanket restriction in place (HOLC, 1940). Ferguson was not an anomaly. Over 80% of St. Louis County homes built by 1950 had a deed restriction (Gordon, 2023). In other words, 80% of homeowners in the St. Louis region played a direct role in driving racial segregation by actively choosing to put restrictive language in their deeds.

A variety of social pressures reinforced segregation. A news story from the St. Louis *Star and Times* (1924) blamed "unscrupulous real estate agents of both races"

for the expansion of Black residents into a larger section of North City. In 1949, the Missouri Supreme Court ruled that sellers could sue real estate agents for damages if they sold their home to Black homebuyers (this ruling was declared unconstitutional in 1953). News stories reported violence against Black homebuyers in diversifying areas ranging from vandalism to physical violence (Johnson, 2020). The cities of Creve Coeur and Black Jack provide staggering examples of the lengths White residents were willing to go to in order to reinforce racial segregation.

In the 1950s, Dr. Howard Venable bought land, obtained permits, and began construction on a home in Creve Coeur, an all-White municipality in the western section of St. Louis County. Dr. Venable was head of the Department of Ophthalmology at Homer G. Phillips Hospital, a Professor at the St. Louis University School of Medicine, and was active in terms of community service, earning the Outstanding Humanitarian Service Award from the American Academy of Ophthalmology in 1944 (Johnson, 2020). Dr. Venable was also Black. White residents, upon discovering the race of their new neighbor, attempted to buy the property from Dr. Venable, who declined the offer. In response, White residents pressured the local government and elected a new mayor. The newly elected government had the property condemned so that the municipality could build Creve Coeur Park. These actions were declared constitutional in 1959 by the Missouri Appeals Court because race was not explicitly mentioned in the justification for purchasing the land (Johnson, 2020).

Unfortunately, stories like Dr. Venable's (and the White residents who prevented him from moving into Creve Coeur) are not uncommon in St. Louis. In 1968, St. Mark's United Methodist Church received funding to construct a racially integrated apartment building in Black Jack, which was an unincorporated area in North County. Upon hearing about the mixed-race development, White residents organized, incorporated as the city of Black Jack, and re-zoned the site of the proposed development (Johnson, 2020). A Missouri District Court would later rule these actions unconstitutional because "racial criticism [of the development] was made and cheered at public meetings. The uncontradicted evidence shows that, at all levels of opposition, race played a significant role in both the drive to incorporate and the decision to rezone" (*United States v. City of Black Jack, Missouri*, 1974, p. 5).

The term "structural racism" typically causes people to equate racism with institutions (Jeffries, 2019; Kendi, 2023). Institutions play a vital role in promoting racist policies and practices, but focusing too narrowly on institutions removes people from the discussion. Minimizing the role of people in the creation and maintenance of racist policies and practices distorts the pervasive reality of racist beliefs and minimizes responsibility of all people to address the impact of these beliefs (Kendi, 2023). In terms of racial segregation, St. Louisans were not passive bystanders. Though racist sentiments may not have been universal, restrictive language was found in 80% of deeds from homes built by 1950. People did not always perpetuate racial segregation using highly visible means (e.g., the East St. Louis Massacre) and racist sentiment was not just practiced by subgroups of people who were overtly racist (e.g., the Veiled Prophet; Jeffries, 2019; Johnson, 2020). Rather, racist policies and practices were often a collective effort. Thus, contemporary efforts to reverse the impact of racist policies and practices must be an equally collective effort.

The Role of Local Government

As seen in the examples above, individuals played a key role in pressuring local government officials to maintain racial segregation. However, local government also had a direct role in creating and maintaining racial segregation without public pressure. When examining red lining maps (Gordon, 2008) or blight maps in city plans (St. Louis City Plan Commission, 1947), North City and South City appear similar in terms of economic struggles. However, racial zoning ordinances combined with realtors' agreements and deed covenants concentrated Black residents in the Northern part of St. Louis City. As a result, North and South St. Louis received very different responses from local government despite facing similar challenges. For example, the 1907 city plan called for creating linkages between various immigrant communities including Italian, German, Russian, and Jewish residents. But the plan recommended that Chestnut Valley, a predominantly Black section of St. Louis, be turned into a public park (Johnson, 2020). The 1907 plan created the blueprint of demolishing Black neighborhoods for "public" amenities that was used by Creve Coeur residents to condemn Dr. Venable's home nearly fifty years later.

Harland Bartholomew served as the St. Louis City planning commissioner from 1919 to 1950 and was a key figure in St. Louis' segregationist efforts (Johnson, 2020). He also had a profound impact on segregation across the country; he created plans for Kenosha, Wisconsin; Peoria, Illinois; Newark, New Jersey and other cities. Bartholomew's greatest contribution to racial inequality was understanding the importance of language. He used seemingly "race neutral" language to promote racial segregation. For example, Bartholomew believed that "zoning is a justifiable use of the police power in the interests of health, safety, and the general welfare" (Johnson, 2020, p. 292). Health, safety, and social welfare were frequently used, racially coded terms that drove segregation in local policy.

A major reason why "race neutral" narratives reinforce racist policies and practices today is that they are rooted in racist sentiment. One of Bartholomew's early acts as city planning commissioner was the 1919 city plan (Johnson, 2020). In the plan, North City was zoned for high density housing (Johnson, 2020). Conversely, South City was repeatedly zoned and rezoned for low and medium density housing. High density housing served two primary purposes. First, high density housing meant that more Black families could occupy a smaller geographic footprint in North City. Second, "high density" became a commonly used "race neutral" term to drive racial segregation and disinvestment in St. Louis City (Cambria et al., 2018). By Bartholomew's own admission, his approach to zoning would "Preserve those districts [i.e., North and South City] in their present condition" (Johnson, 2020, p. 293). In short, the city of St. Louis was intentionally preserving racial segregation.

In many areas of North City, White landlords bought homes and rented them to Black families, but did not typically update the properties to accommodate the new zoning. Homes that were originally one- or two-family units now held four or five families (Johnson, 2020). This meant that some families did not have access to a kitchen, bathroom, or other amenities within their rental unit. Families often built outbuildings such as exterior stairs and outdoor plumbing to make their homes habitable (Johnson, 2020). These adaptations, which were necessary for the survival of Black families being exploited by landlords and city zoning, would come back to haunt Black residents of North City in the 1947 comprehensive city plan.

The 1947 comprehensive city plan was one of Harland Bartholomew's last major acts as city planning commissioner. It also highlights the intersection of racism, economics, and local policy. According to the assessment in the 1947 plan, blighted and obsolete buildings were fairly evenly distributed across the city (City Plan Commission, 1947). Once again, the plan had very different responses for North and South City despite similar conditions. North City was zoned for high density units whereas South City was zoned to preserve medium and low density units (City Plan Commission, 1947). As we will see in the following section, the 1947 city plan was instrumental in determining which sections of St. Louis would be demolished for subsidized housing and "Urban Renewal" programs in the following decades. These programs would have a disproportionate, negative impact on the predominantly Black residents in North City.

Like many zoning documents in St. Louis, the 1947 city plan rarely mentioned race explicitly (City Plan Commission, 1947). Instead, the city focused on economic factors to justify preserving South City and demolishing North City. For example, up to 60% of the homes in the predominantly Black North City neighborhood of Desoto-Carr did not have access to indoor plumbing. Increasing access to indoor plumbing is a worthy and seemingly race neutral goal. However, overt racial exclusion in the early 1900s meant that Black St. Louisans were concentrated in North City. North City was re-zoned for higher density homes in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. Landlords did not typically update their properties to accommodate the influx of predominantly Black residents. As a result, Black families were considerably more likely to live in a housing unit that did not have indoor plumbing. Therefore, Black families were compelled to adapt by building exterior structures including toilets. These survival mechanisms were used as a justification to demolish predominately Black neighborhoods.

Though the 1947 city plan primarily relied on economic justifications to continue driving racial segregation, race and racism still mattered. Ladue, a wealthy municipality in St. Louis County, was green-lined because it contained "not a single foreigner or negro" (Johnson, 2020, p. 317). The HOLC's (1940) description of Ferguson stated that "An outlying section [of Ferguson is] about 30% built up and abutting a large red (colored) area to the west" (C-25). The proximity to Black residents was viewed as a threat to development. There is a tendency to treat race and income as two competing explanations for inequality. The 1947 comprehensive city plan shows that, though race and socioeconomic status are not interchangeable, they can both be used to drive racial segregation.

Focusing exclusively on economics as a justification for "community development" made North City a target for Urban Renewal programs that decimated predominantly Black neighborhoods in North City through land clearance, the concentration of subsidized housing, and highway construction (Gordon, 2008; Swanstrom, 2019). These programs will be described in the following section because they illustrate how local application of federal programs perpetuated racial inequality. However, local governments did more to promote racial inequality than the biased application of federal programs. One of the most infamous examples is the Team Four Plan (Team Four Inc., 1976). The underlying philosophy of the plan was triaging the region by conserving areas that were already "nice," redeveloping areas that had, "the potential to attract and improve," and depleting areas by implementing a "no growth policy until firm market and public resources are available" (Team Four Inc., 1976).

Not surprisingly, the majority of areas marked for depletion were concentrated in North City whereas areas slated for conservation or redevelopment were located in South City (Team Four Inc., 1976). The plan built upon the unequal and racially biased foundation that was created in the preceding decades. It is fair to state that St. Louis City never formally adopted the Team Four Plan (Johnson, 2020). However, there is a tendency to raise this point and end the conversation as though the Team Four Plan was the only policy affecting St. Louis City. There were other problematic practices that capitalized on and exacerbated racial inequality. Prior to the Team Four Plan, Alderman Richard Gephardt and Alderman John Roach introduced Alderman Bills 19 and 20. These bills proposed preserving 74,000 buildings in South City and demolishing 70,000 buildings in North City where "rehabilitation would be uneconomical" (Olson, 2016, p. 337).

Much like the Team Four Plan, these bills were never enacted (Olson, 2016). But Gephardt would later guide federal policy as a US Congressman, House majority leader, and even as a Democratic presidential candidate. John Roach would later resign from the Board of Alderman and head the St. Louis Community Development Agency. Research highlighting the unequal development of North and South City (Mallach, 2020; Swanstrom et al., 2015) suggests that community development in St. Louis mirrored the philosophical underpinnings behind Alderman Bills 19 and 20, and the Team Four Plan. Much like the 1947 plan, Team Four, Inc. and the alderman behind Bills 19 and 20 used seemingly race neutral justifications for their bills.

Minimizing the harsh reality that local government created and reinforced multiple racist policies and practices prevents us from authentically learning from our history (Jeffries, 2019). Overt racial zoning was preserved in the 1919 city plan through seemingly race neutral zoning. This zoning, combined with disinvestment and neglect in North City, had a profound impact on which neighborhoods were selected for demolition in the 1947 city plan. This pattern of disinvestment would continue and ultimately determine which areas were "insignificant and not worthy of special maintenance effort" in the 1970s (Olson, 2016, p. 337). The belief that development in North City is "uneconomical" (Olson, 2016, p. 337) persists. This philosophy is also part of the reason why the region continues to struggle today both in terms of economic recovery and racial disparities (Cooper-McCann, 2016; El-Khattabi & Lester, 2019; Fetter, 2023; Luce, 2003; Mason & Thomas, 2010). Today, local government is not overtly intentionally driving racial inequality in the region. However, creating stronger linkages between our past and present would identify that we inherited a racialized philosophy of community "development" and racial inequality.

The Role of Federal Government

The New Deal, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's domestic policy during the 1930s, aimed to lift the United States out of the Great Depression (Rothstein, 2017). Among other measures, the New Deal created the Public Works Administration in 1933 to address the housing shortage and create construction jobs across the country. A race-based component of the legislation was the neighborhood composition rule, which stated that urban renewal projects should not drastically alter a neighborhood's racial composition. The neighborhood composition rule had two major flaws. The first is that the overtly racial practices that concentrated Black residents in North City made it easy for local governments to use "race neutral" language to prioritize authentic

development in White neighborhoods because officials like Harland Bartholomew could use "South City" as a constitutional substitute for "White."

Federal policy created a dynamic of unequal quantity and unequal quality of opportunities for Black individuals. The unequal application of the New Deal can be seen across the country. Of the 26 development projects completed in the Northeast and Midwest, 6 were for White residents, 8 were for Black residents, and 2 were mixed-race, but segregated by neighborhood (Rothstein, 2017). Thus, White residents in need of housing had more opportunities created for them by The New Deal, and White housing developments were typically in desirable areas and closer to amenities compared to developments built for Black residents (Rothstein, 2017).

A second flaw with the neighborhood composition rule is that developers still managed to find ways to drive segregation despite the rule. Desoto-Carr was an integrated neighborhood in the 1930s. Developers originally proposed clearing the land and building low-rise apartments for White residents. The federal government correctly objected to the plan. Then, developers created a new plan to for a "mixed race" neighborhood that segregated Black and White residents by building. Not only is it problematic that developers attempted to impose racial segregation on the smallest scale within their power (i.e., building), but many White residents fled these neighborhoods during development and especially after buildings began desegregating (Johnson, 2020). Given the immense social, political, and legal pressures described in the previous sections, Black residents had considerably fewer housing options outside of North City.

Another New Deal era federal-level driver of racial segregation was the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), established in 1934. The first FHA underwriting manual provided that "If a neighborhood is to retain stability it is necessary that properties shall continue to be occupied by the same social and racial classes" (Rothstein, 2017, p. 65). As was the case with many other policies, overt references to race would evolve into racially coded language. For example, the 1952 underwriting manual focused on "compatibility among neighborhood occupants" (Rothstein, 2017, p. 65). Though the words in the underwriting manual changed, the FHA continued to drive segregation. Between 1934 and 1960, the FHA covered five times as many home loans in increasingly White St. Louis County compared to St. Louis City, and only 3.3% of FHA-insured mortgages in the City and County went to Black residents (Johnson, 2020).

The FHA's practices affected other federal programs as well. For example, one of the many goals of the G.I. Bill was to help veterans buy homes. The Veterans Administration (VA) used the FHA's underwriting manual for granting loans to veterans. Because of this, the VA denied mortgage assistance to Black veterans at a higher rate (Rothstein, 2017). This is particularly troubling considering that FHA and VA loans comprised 50% of the home loans in the 1950s (Rothstein, 2017). Because home ownership played an important role in wealth accumulation, denying Black home buyers loans would have inter-generational economic consequences (Sharkey, 2014).

Though the FHA affected segregation by denying loans to Black homebuyers, the FHA's real power was in its ability to fund the construction of new developments (Rothstein, 2017). Much like their lending practices for homebuyers, the FHA granted loans to White developments. In 1943, Charles Vatterot obtained FHA funding to create St. Ann, a development that would attract White Catholics in St. Louis. Vatterot

then tried to build De Porres, a subdivision for Black homebuyers a few miles down the road from St. Ann. The FHA refused to finance the development, which had a cascading effect on the project. Without FHA financing, Vatterot had to build cheaper units and could not incorporate the same amenities in De Porres as he had in St. Ann. Further, the FHA would not finance Black homebuyers, which meant that Black St. Louisans had to rent the housing units (Rothstein, 2017). This resulted in a persistent pattern of expanding White St. Louisans' access to home ownership and restricting the quantity (and quality) of home ownership options for Black St. Louisans.

The desire to segregate is also apparent in one of the most popular Urban Renewal projects of the 1950s: subsidized housing. St. Louis government chose to concentrate subsidized housing in North City despite the federal government's recommendation to use a scatter-site approach (Gordon, 2008; Rothstein, 2017). Eventually, these practices would result in Pruitt-Igoe, which is one of the most infamous subsidized housing projects in the history of the United States. Though it is widely remembered as a failure of public housing, the reality is that Pruitt-Igoe is a success story in terms of how racist policies and practices on the individual, local, and federal levels intersect. Pruitt-Igoe was first occupied in 1954, and was the largest subsidized housing project in the city. It was originally a mixed-race complex that was segregated by building. The buildings were integrated in 1955 as the result of a U.S. District Court ruling (Johnson, 2020). Even before the ruling in *Davis et al. v. St. Louis Housing Authority* (1952), White St. Louisans opted to not live in Pruitt-Igoe and instead were part of White flight to the suburbs in St. Louis County (Swanstrom, 2019).

Despite White flight, Pruitt-Igoe was 91% occupied in 1957 and a majority of tenants were Black (Johnson, 2020). Black residents were more likely to live in Pruitt-Igoe because of the limited quantity of housing available to Black homebuyers as a result of individual (e.g., deed covenants), local (e.g., zoning), and federal practices (e.g., FHA lending). Despite these challenges, Black residents in Pruitt-Igoe did well in the early years of the complex's existence (Johnson, 2020). However, a combination of factors including cost-saving shortcuts during construction and dehumanizing federal requirements to live in subsidized housing limited the quality of living in Pruitt-Igoe. In addition, the City of St. Louis did not continue investing in the maintenance of Pruitt-Igoe. As noted by Johnson (2020), the money that could have gone to maintain Pruitt-Igoe instead went to revitalize downtown St. Louis because the city housing authority and city land clearance authority shared a budget. In other words, money that could have been invested in Black St. Louisans instead was diverted to the Central Corridor.

The discussion of the federal government reveals the myth of "race neutral" policies. Though the neighborhood composition rule was designed to preserve the racial composition of neighborhoods, the rule was used to concentrate community development efforts in White neighborhoods and ways were found around the rule to create White enclaves across the region (Johnson, 2020). Federal agencies like the FHA included overt segregationist language in its underwriting manual. Though these policies would evolve and adopt seemingly race neutral language, race neutral language was not enough to change the FHA's practice of driving racial segregation. Grafting this racialized language onto other polices affected multiple federal programs (Rothstein, 2017). Our history shows that racial disparities are not the result of race neutral development. Thus, policies and practices must explicitly address racial disparities if they are to promote equitable outcomes.

Discussion

Community development is essential for the prosperity of St. Louis. A key question for social work practice is: what does community development look like when we've learned from our history? Racist policies and practices at the individual, local, and federal levels had compounding effects on each other, creating a robust, multifaceted system of racialized development that still affects St. Louis today (Mallach, 2020; Swanstrom, 2019). Understanding that present day disparities are the result of an evolution of racist policy and practice is important. However, understanding how racist policy and practice evolved over time is necessary to dismantle the systems created by racist policies and practices (Kendi, 2023).

The Team Four Plan is a testament to the impossibility of doing equitable community development while minimizing the reality of historical racism. The plan acknowledged the importance of developing what it called "depletion areas" without harming the people already living there (Team Four Inc., 1976). The plan also acknowledged that "the forces causing [depletion areas] are extremely complex," and disproportionately affect Black residents (Team Four Inc., 1976, p. iii). However, Team Four Inc. (1976) chose to focus on the present realities of depletion areas such as "abandoned buildings, vacant lots, and economic collapse" (p. iii), as opposed to unpacking the racist policies and practices that created depletion areas to begin with.

Persistent disinvestment in predominantly Black neighborhoods prior to 1975 meant that home values were lower in these areas (Swanstrom et al., 2015). Property taxes and by extension, funding for schools and other amenities were lower in predominantly Black neighborhoods as well. Over time, the property values of homes in predominately White neighborhoods increased more rapidly than in predominately Black neighborhoods, widening the gap between White and Black neighborhoods in St. Louis (Johnson, 2020) and America (Rothstein, 2017; Sharkey, 2014). As a result, racial segregation was reinforced by focusing on the present realities of depletion, rather than tackling the legacy of racist policies and practices that created depletion areas. Some practitioners in the region are challenging the cycle of repeating the past and expecting different results, and addressing underlying issues as opposed to symptoms of deeper problems (Krehmeyer, 2022). But what is too often missing from this discussion is an explicit accounting of the "deeper issues" – particularly as it relates to the evolution of racial inequality in the region. The following sections discuss the importance of placing social work practice, research, and education in historical context, particularly in terms of how racist policies and practices shape present day disparities.

Implications for Practice

Explicitly creating linkages between modern day social work practice and the historical evolution of racist policies and practices is a critical step in antiracist social work (Kendi, 2023). While it is particularly important to incorporate historical context in community practice because of the well-established history of discrimination in zoning, real estate, housing, and urban renewal; the history of racist policies and practices in the United States affects all aspects of social work practice (Johnson, 2020**;** Kendi, 2016; Rothstein, 2017). The belief that development in North City is

uneconomical persists in St. Louis. As a result, the region continues to invest in already thriving areas (Fetter, 2023; Luce, 2003; Mason & Thomas, 2010).

As made apparent in the historical overview of St. Louis, investing in areas with "the potential to attract continued investment" (Team Four Inc., 1976, p. 3) is a consistent, racially coded philosophy of community development. Investing funds in vibrant areas has a questionable impact on economic outcomes in St. Louis (El-Khattabi & Lester, 2019; Luce, 2003; Mason & Thomas, 2010). Further, it is likely part of the reason why racial disparities persist in the region (Cooper-McCann, 2016; El-Khattabi & Lester, 2019; Fetter, 2023; Luce, 2003; Mason & Thomas, 2010). Creating stronger linkages between our past and present would identify that St. Louis is using a racialized philosophy of community investment and expecting different results.

Understanding the history of racial segregation is important for clinical social workers as well because racist policies and practices touch nearly every topic related to social justice. In the case of St. Louis, challenges in terms of access to healthcare (Yearby, 2018); increased rates of police contact, police brutality, and an overreliance on the police to generate municipal revenue (Arch City Defenders, 2014; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015); voter disenfranchisement (Okonta, 2017), and substance use and mental health issues (St. Louis Department of Health, 2023) are all concentrated in North St. Louis County and North St. Louis City. Because St. Louis is not an outlier in terms of racist policy and practice, it is reasonable to suggest that the racialized concentration of social injustice is similar in other areas (Rothstein, 2017).

Rooting contemporary practice in historical context reveals that social workers are more likely to practice in areas that are shaped by racism. Because of this, we are also in a unique position to simultaneously provide social services that address the immediate needs of individuals affected by racist policies and practices, and promote broader social change that addresses oppressive structures (Wolff, 2013). It is important for social workers to meet people where they are and work to address their immediate needs. However, social workers can also anchor the immediate needs of people seeking services in the broader forces that create and maintain injustices (Baines, 2011). Incorporating practices like consciousness raising in social work practice can identify shared issues, common interests, and empower individuals to pursue broader structural changes (Freire, 2020; Pitner & Sakamoto, 2016). Social workers can assist in these efforts by facilitating opportunities for civic engagement such as voter registration and leveraging organizational relationships to connect individuals with key groups like policymakers (Abramovitz et al., 2019).

There is an increasing focus on the role of professionals in creating and influencing policies (Apgar, 2021; Baines, 2011; Costa et al., 2021; Wolff, 2013). As a profession dedicated to advocating for human rights at both the individual and systems level, all social workers are called to engage in this work (Apgar, 2021). Despite social work's foundation in social justice, social workers only engage in moderate levels of activism (Krings et al., 2020; Mattocks, 2018). However, social workers also engage with people and places often ignored by society or worse, dehumanized and politicized as social problems. As such, social workers are in a position to challenge these highly racialized, dehumanizing narratives at multiple levels (Costa et al., 2021). In the civic arena, social workers can expand access to voting; share their experiences with elected officials; and connect policymakers with stories, experiences, and people that are often ignored (Apgar, 2021; Costa et al., 2021).

Outside of politics, social workers are able to increase the visibility of people and injustice in the general population (Costa et al., 2021). Increasing our understanding of the historical evolution of racist policies and practices, combined with our proximity to individuals disproportionately affected by structural racism, creates opportunities for social workers to make the contemporary effects of structural racism more tangible to people in our personal and professional networks. By extension, social workers can use this increased awareness to mobilize these networks (Costa et al., 2021). Americans, particularly White Americans, are more likely to deny the existence of structural racism and avoid talking about race or racism in the United States (Sullivan et al., 2021). Though White individuals with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to identify as allies, they are less likely to support racial equity in practice (Wodtke, 2016). The history of St. Louis shows how widespread racist practices were among the population. Social workers can play an important role in mobilizing an equally large countermovement.

Implications for Research

Explicitly situating our research in historical context is necessary if we wish to interpret our work in a way that actively stands against racist policies and practices (Kendi, 2023). In social science research methods, "history" typically refers to events, other than the intervention, that may have occurred between the pretest and post-test observations and how these events may have affected the study's findings (Rubin & Babie, 2016). Based on this definition, history threatens the internal validity of experimental and quasi-experimental research. While this issue is important in terms of causal inference, this definition of history limits our ability to have deeper conversations about how social work can promote equity and inclusion through our research. History, defined as the study of change over time, includes the events that occurred before pre-test observations which can have an impact on findings as well.

Studies exploring neighborhood development in St. Louis utilize datasets that begin in a particular decade (e.g., the 1950s: Swanstrom et al., 2015; 1970s: Webber & Swanstrom, 2014; 1990s: Mallach, 2020; or 2000s: Fetter, 2023) and assess changes over time. The authors clearly state that racial and economic factors may have affected the relationships under study (Mallach, 2020; Swanstrom et al., 2015; Webber & Swanstrom, 2014). However, these data are also biased by the years and decades that precede them. Datasets starting in 1950 were affected by Harland Bartholomew's 31-year career. All told, Bartholomew's reign as planning commissioner included the demolition of over 100 square blocks containing the homes of 100,000 residents. Nearly all (95%) of the residents in these neighborhoods were Black (Johnson, 2020). Though this history occurred before the periods under study, it most likely had an impact on studies' findings because St. Louis was already repeating a pattern of racialized "development."

An analysis of St. Louis City and St. Louis County neighborhoods between 1970 and 2010 (Swanstrom et al., 2015) showed that the vast majority of declining, or consistently low-income neighborhoods are located in North City and North County whereas consistently wealthy neighborhoods are concentrated in West County and South County. Middle income neighborhoods that are potentially rebounding economically are concentrated in South City (Swanstrom et al., 2015). This pattern of rebounding versus declining neighborhoods mirrors the historical pattern of preserving

and investing in predominately White South St. Louis and disinvesting in the predominately Black North St. Louis.

An examination of St. Louis City's Black, middle neighborhoods (i.e., neighborhoods that aren't distressed or thriving) from 1990 to 2015 showed that middle neighborhoods in North City declined considerably more compared to peer neighborhoods in South City (Mallach, 2020). Mallach (2020) states that the unequal development between Black neighborhoods in North and South City may be due to subprime lending. However, subprime lending is not a new or race neutral phenomenon (Faber, 2013). The FHA's practice of denying home loans to Black homebuyers meant that Black individuals were historically more likely to obtain subprime loans (Rothstein, 2017). Further, unequal investment between North City and South City means that lenders like the FHA are less likely to grant loans to homebuyers in North City (Johnson, 2020).

An examination of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) projects in St. Louis City from 2010-2020 (Fetter, 2023) demonstrates that, although the goal of TIF projects is intended to stimulate economic development in distressed neighborhoods, St. Louis City concentrates TIF funds in low poverty areas like the Central Corridor (Fetter, 2023; Luce, 2003; Mason & Thomas, 2010). The findings of Fetter (2023) and others (Luce, 2003; Mason & Thomas, 2010) provide quantitative evidence that St. Louis is continuing the pattern of diverting funds from predominately Black spaces in favor of investing in places like the Central Corridor. This pattern of development is limited in terms of its economic impact on the region and may be a reason why racial disparities persist in St. Louis (Cooper-McCann, 2016; El-Khattabi & Lester, 2019; Fetter, 2023; Luce, 2003; Mason & Thomas, 2010).

It is important for researchers to understand how neighborhoods can rebound economically (Swanstrom et al., 2015), diagnose the presence and evolution of racial disparities (Mallach, 2020), and explore why the pressures of gentrification appear weaker in places like St. Louis (Fetter, 2023; Swanstrom & Plöger, 2022). The authors of these studies acknowledge that racial and economic factors influence the relationships under study (Mallach, 2020; Swanstrom & Plöger, 2022; Swanstrom et al., 2015). In academic outlets with higher word counts such as dissertations (Fetter, 2023) and book chapters (Swanstrom, 2019) authors are able provide more historical context. However, the history of racist policies and practices needs to be an explicit part of the interpretation of our findings in all outlets because the findings of contemporary research can be partially attributable to the racialized context of community development over the past century. More importantly, explicitly linking present day research in historical context can inform discussions on how we can develop innovative and equitable practices that end these racialized patterns of development (Swanstrom, 2019).

Implications for Education

The history of St. Louis shows that present day racial disparities were created and are maintained by a complex, multi-level system of beliefs, behaviors, policies and practices. Explicitly linking our present to our past is a vital step in antiracist education because these issues are an extension of historical racist policies and practices (Johnson, 2020; Kendi, 2023; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). For example, this manuscript describes how Black individuals were concentrated in North City and North

County and the lack of investment in these areas. As a result, these neighborhoods are still predominately Black and have lower property values and by extension, lower property taxes today (Johnson, 2020; Rothstein, 2017; Sharkey, 2014). Many municipalities, including Ferguson, generate the vast majority of their revenue from traffic fines and court fees (Arch City Defenders, 2014; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015). Thus poverty at the municipal government level creates a system that incentivizes increased police contact in predominately Black neighborhoods.

This system is an obstacle to promoting racial equity regardless of police intent. In the words of a Ferguson resident, "Even if race didn't matter, it's gonna look racist if you have police pulling over people for every little thing in a Black neighborhood" (Gearhart, 2019, p. 73). In addition, using law enforcement to generate revenue perpetuates a cycle where individuals are incarcerated for living in poverty (Arch City Defenders, 2014). In the words of another resident of Ferguson, "You pay $75 of a $300 ticket, miss a payment, then get fined. Then there's a warrant out for your arrest. It's a crushing system" (Gearhart, 2019, p. 73). Whether students plan to challenge oppressive systems through policy change, or providing direct care to people caught in these systems, it is important that we place our curricula is historical context so we create explicit linkages between classroom content and antiracist practice.

History also highlights the futility of mono-level approaches. Simply put, micro or macro practice alone is unable to address the issues facing St. Louis or the United States. Though there is value in specialization, treating micro and macro practice as competing concentrations is a false dichotomy that undermines the profession's collective power (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). Skills and modalities typically associated with micro practice like active listening, trauma informed care and motivational interviewing play an important role in inclusive, equitable, and effective macro practice (Dungy & Krings, 2023; Finn & Molly, 2021; Lombard & Viviers, 2020). Similarly, skills associated with macro practice can help clinicians "shift from social service to social change" (Wolff, 2013, p. 10).

Reconciling the divide between micro and macro practice is a grand challenge of social work because both approaches have value in antiracist practice (Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). Yet, as a profession, there is a disconnect between micro and macro interventions, and macro practice is marginalized (Krings et al., 2020; Rothman & Mizrahi, 2014). Surveys of social work students suggest that, regardless of concentration, students view macro social work as important, so this division is not driven by student interests (Krings et al., 2020). Shifting away from macro practice limits social work's ability to change the status quo, which runs contrary to antiracist practice (Kendi, 2023). There are multiple resources to help social work educators develop pedagogical approaches that bridge the micro-macro divide (e.g., Apgar, 2021; Finn & Molly, 2021; Gates et al., 2023) and I encourage readers to engage with those readings. Social work must approach education in a manner that prepares all social workers to practice social change at multiple levels including individual, group, neighborhood, and policy (Lombard & Viviers, 2020).

Conclusion

The history of St. Louis demonstrates the widespread, multilevel, and enduring nature of racist policies and practices. Though not an exhaustive recounting of the region's history, it is apparent that individuals, local governments, and federal policy

all played a part in creating and maintaining racial segregation in the region. These policies and practices reinforced each other, for example when New Deal policies were applied unequally by St. Louis government in the 1950s. In addition, they compounded inequality over time. High density zoning in the 1919 city plan contributed to the economic disparities that were used to demolish predominately Black neighborhoods in the 1947 city plan. These disparities persist today (Johnson, 2020).

More importantly, unpacking our history shows how separating research, practice, and education from historical context can result in repeating the same racist policies and practices while hoping for different results. As social workers, we need to situate our work in historical context so we not only understand that racism is a root cause for many of the social injustices we face today, and we can use our knowledge of how racist policies and practices evolved (Kendi, 2023). Doing so is necessary for developing practices that actively combat the lingering effects of our history and create a more just world (Uehara et al., 2013).

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