



ABSTRACT

Colorism has become a worldwide issue that has transverse the span of time. Defined as prejudice against persons based on their skin color or complexion, Colorism has hidden in between the circumstances of racism for decades unscathed by social evolution. Due to the legacy of slavery in the United States, darker skinned Americans have endured several social inequalities such as segregation, bias, and the focus of this review Colorism. Historical events have shown that Colorism is a contributing factor in internalized racism; which is known as the normalization of biased attitudes towards members that share their own ethnic group and the dissociation of the self from the marginalized group. This notion is further supported by the normalization of racial stratum amongst American society since the days of the first pioneers. Colorism is a well-known phenomenon in the history of the United States where it was used as means to give individuals of lighter color a more affluent position in society. Unfortunately, the basic notion of White vs. Black racism leaves little room to recognize the additional disparities of colorism suffered by darker skinned persons. These disparities create a stagnant environment for darker skinned individuals to progress socially, academically, and psychologically. Regrettably, darker skin is often associated with criminal activity, uncleanliness, and lower socioeconomic status, which has created an array of issues amongst its members. This leads to the purpose of this review which is to present the evolution of colorism, its ramifications on society specifically on law, education, and mental health, and explore how scholars have tackled this issue.

METHODS

The literature was reviewed utilizing electronic databases such as PsychInfo, Ebsco, Google Scholar, Cobimet, and other academic journals. Keywords used for the data included: colorism and education, colorism and negative self-evaluation, self-appraisal, racial stratification, skin tone, and institutionalized racism. Initially, fifty articles were considered. However, after careful dissemination, 20 articles were selected on their merit and reliability. Academic Journals and textbooks were considered for selection depending on the impact and past contribution to the field and society. A requisite for the literature selected was that it was ethical, empirically structured, and peer reviewed.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

- Historically, Blackness has been associated with crime and poverty (Firebaugh & Acciai, 2016).
- Data supporting the prevalence of Black people in the CJ system fails to mention that the figure is due to hierarchical disparities established by society (Petersilia, 1983; Ray, 2019; Yates, 1997)
- Data concerning disparity in sentencing due to Afrocentric features and/or skin pigmentation report that those individuals with Afrocentric features received harsher sentences than those with less Afrocentric features (Blair et al. 2004; Eberhardt et al. 2006).
- Hochschild and Weaver (2007) conducted a research among 66,927 male felons incarcerated for the first time in Georgia from 1995 through 2002 and concluded that dark-skinned males received longer sentences overall. These differences in sentencing reflect the racial basis permeating the American justice system (Muller, 2012, p.283)

EDUCATION

- Studies have found that light-skinned Black people attain more schooling than their darker-skinned counterparts (Allen, Telles & Hunter, 2000; Hunter, 2016).
- As colorism works as a subset of systemic racism, it does not require White vigilance, only the internalization of hierarchical skin color stratification and Eurocentric beauty standards (Hunter, 2016).
- Data from 2011 to 2012 showed that Black females were 3 times more likely to be suspended from school than the national average of their counterparts (Blake, Keith, Luo, Le, Salter, 2017)
- Blake et al (2017), found that dark skinned Black females were twice as likely to be suspended than white females, while this discrepancy did not extend to light skinned Black females.

MENTAL HEALTH

- A study conducted in 2017, suggested that African American students face a misconstrued perception of themselves because of colorism (Lige, Peteet, Brown, 2017).
- They found that African American students who do not view African Americans favorably and subscribe less to their African American identity may potentially internalize being the perceived “other” in higher education and feel like they do not belong (Lige, Peteet, Brown, 2017).
- In another study, researchers found that African American adolescents lacked the attributes necessary to partake in productive school bonding and grade retention which put them more at risk for mental health issues (Rose et al., 2017).
- In addition, Butler-Barnes and colleagues (2018) suggested that African American girls lacked the protective factor of racial identity necessary to become resilient individuals (n=733; Mage= 14.5).

SOLUTIONS

- Individuals focused on the surface of the White to Black, or Black to White discrimination fail to recognize a legacy of White supremacy: colorism.
- In order to move forward from the aftermath of slavery, years of oppressions and discrimination, society must divert from European beauty standards and reallocate social capital towards education and conscientization of American society.
- Additionally, politicians should provide equitable protection to darker skin Blacks and Black Americans as one way to ameliorate colorism.
- Black Lives Matter” are important and opportune to provide a voice to those who feel powerless (Brooms & Perry, 2016) to speak up and expose the ugly truth of racial bias within the criminal justice system.
- Education, acknowledgement, and understanding are key factors in possibly eradicating racial disparities within the Criminal Justice system (Brooms & Perry, 2016, p. 180)

REFERENCES

****Available upon request**