Beyond the Crayon Box: A Scoping Review Protocol for Colorism in Schools

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ABSTRACT

Background: Colorism is ingrained in systems like racism. Since, it is a global phenomenon among people of color also of all ages, it is pertinent to inform best practices in education with young people to promote healthy developmental growth. To diminish the racial/ethnic/color disparities experienced by students of color in American schools, it is essential to have substantial literature available that consist of the adverse consequences that colorism have on children and youth in schools. Such information will aid educators to better serve and care for the well-being of those who suffer effects of colorism.

Methods/Design: Scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles will be searched utilizing 10 of the EBSCOhost databases, JSTOR, Social Service Abstracts, and Google Scholar. The EBSCOhost databases will have an open date along with limiters for geography and age. JSTOR, Social Service Abstracts, and Google Scholar will have a publication date ranch of 2009-2020. Dissertations and Theses grey literature will not be excluded from those databases. The search selections of literature will be inclusive of all methodology designs. Following the PRISMA-P guidelines, the eligibility of literature will be set through raters screening the titles, abstracts, and subsequent full-texts. Data extraction and synthesis will be conducted for both qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Discussion: This scoping review will ascertain barriers to success for young people of color through examining the outcomes linked to colorism. Furthermore, it will disseminate an understanding of cultural competency to meet the needs of diverse groups.

Keywords: scoping review protocol, colorism, skin tone discrimination among students of color, teacher education

1. Background

Ethnic and racial disparities in the United States public education system are long standing. The disparities in access are alarming. Black and Latino students are less likely to have access to college prep courses and when they do, they are still underrepresented in these classes. They represent 38% of students in schools with access to AP courses but only 29% of those actually enrolled (Washington-Dos Santos, 2019). They also have less access to gifted and talented program and are instead over-referred to special education or remedial tracks. Disparities in outcomes due to teacher bias are also a cause for alarm. Black and Latino

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students are over referred for harsh discipline and as a result spend less time in the classroom. Black students are overly policed, 2.3 times more likely than white peers to receive a referral to law enforcement (Rovner, 2016). The resource gaps for students of color is also stagnant. Black students are in schools that on average spend $733 less per student if the school is 90% or more students of color as compared to 90% or more white (Center for American Progress, 2012).

These disparities mean that many students of color are not able to climb out of lives of poverty or meet basic needs for themselves and their families. There is increasing emphasis on why these disparities seem to persist. Students of color see disparate outcomes in so many areas of public education that researchers and funders have dedicated millions of dollars and countless years to understanding the contributing factors to the gaps in academic performance, disciplinary actions, graduation rates, and other socio emotional factors that mark success for students of color. Many scholars have begun to explore how color-based discrimination, also known as colorism, is actually the mechanism through which racist practices are enacted against students of color in schools (Hannon et al., 2013; Ryabov, 2013, 2016; Keith & Monroe, 2016; Blake et al., 2017). Colorism, which has its roots in slavery, is the preferential treatment of same race individuals based on their similarity to Europeans in skin tones and phenotypic features like eye color, hair texture, and the shape of noses and lips. It has been described as a daughter of racism, and increasingly in a multicultural society, where individual's race is not immediately apparent, is the mechanism by which people are identified as having African ancestry. Due to factors like immigration, interracial relationships, and colorblind policies, multicultural teaching, the traditional conception of race has shifted (Brown, 2014), but the practice of preferential for more European appearing individuals remains clear. For students in schools colorism manifests in the same ways that racism manifest, but is experienced both inter and intraracially, so that even within schools were the staff, administration, and student body is all people of color, disparities in access, discipline, and performance abound. Lighter skin blacks and Latinos have been demonstrated to have up to 1.5 more years of schooling than darker skinned blacks and Latinos (Murguia & Telles, 1996; GóMez, 2000; also see Monroe, 2013). Also, similar to harsh discipline rates based on race, darker skinned students are up to 3 times more likely to be suspended than lighter skinned students (Blake et al., 2017).

Since colorism is largely based on external features and how those are associated with intellectual capabilities, scholars have posited that the halo effect is actually the mechanism for awarding entry to certain academic tracks, or extracurricular activities, leadership positions college ready courses, and giving a pass on bad behavior (Hunter, 2004). While these theories and preliminary outcomes due to colorism give clues about how teacher and staff bias against Afrocentric features within minority students many other outcomes, such as access to high quality teachers, college prep courses, over policing in schools, are also warranted and necessary to gain traction in closing these gaps.

In schools, what are the lived experiences of students of color with varying skin tones? What are the disparities in levels of access to college prep courses, gifted and talented programs? Are darker skinned students of color faced with even higher rates of referrals to law enforcement in schools? Do they graduate at the same rates as their lighter skin counter parts? What bias and discrimination do they face from teachers and staff in selection of honors, awards, and other accolades? What methods have been used to address colorism in schools or with students of color in schools? Without a full understanding of these topics, the profession of education will continue to circle the wagons of understanding how racism operates within schools. A focus on colorism as that mechanism is what can truly gain traction in the fight to ameliorate racial, ethnic, and color-based disparities in public

education. The lack of answers to these questions also provides a clear research framework for education and sociology scholars to contribute to ways that have closed disparity gaps.

1.2 Objective

This scoping review will examine the state of literature on colorism in schools from the perspective of scholars, practitioners, students of color, and other education stakeholders. The focus will be to demonstrate a profile of how colorism impacts k-12 public education by describing the experiences of colorism from students of color, identifying challenges and disparities in outcomes based on colorism, finding the sources of these color-based disparities, and illuminating what has been done to address these challenges and/or disparities. The broad research question is "What are the experiences and outcomes linked to colorism for students of color in American public schools?" In publishing this scoping review protocol, we are implementing best practices to ensure a thorough, rich, and meaningful outcome that others can replicate.

1.3 Review questions

This scoping review will have several interdependent questions:
- What are the lived experiences of students of color with varying skin tones?
- What are the disparities in levels of access to college prep courses, gifted and talented programs?
- Are darker skinned students of color faced with even higher rates of referrals to law enforcement in schools?
- Do they graduate at the same rates as their lighter skin counter parts?
- What bias and discrimination do they face from teachers and staff in selection of honors, awards, and other accolades?
- What methods have been used to address colorism in schools or with students of color in schools?

2. Methods/Design

2.1 Study design

This scoping review will adhere to the framework of previous scholars (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Hawke et al., 2017). The framework is substantiated by similar systematic review procedures indicative of rigor based on various six stages and transparency of the data for replication. A scoping review broader research question(s) that may be applicable to various research designs differentiates from a systematic review. Whereas systematic reviews are conducted with both the established study designs to examine in advance along with a narrower research question(s). Therefore, a scoping review is a comprehensive approach to identify literature that is in-depth consistent of broader results (Prihodova et al., 2015; Colquhoun et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2009; Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The scoping review is considered a mapping process that is inclusive of methodical investigation, selection, and synthesis of all published sources pertaining to the subject matter (Colquhoun et al., 2014; Levac et al., 2010). The six stages of the scoping review methodology approach will consist of the following. 1). The primary research question will be defined, 2). Relevant studies identified, 3). Study selection, 4). Charting the data, 5). Collating, summarizing, and reporting the results, and 6). Stakeholder consultation(s). The six stages have relevance to methodology of the iterative, conceptual, and interpretation process (Davis et al., 2009).

2.2 Identifying relevant literature

Keywords were established among collaborators using a broad research question as a guide and a university librarian was consulted to indicate the most efficient way to search for journal articles. Based on our broad research question, we will include search terms colorism or colorist or skin tone* discrimination or skin preference* or skin tone bias or skin tone stratification or skin color discrimination AND primary school* or k-12 school* or grade school* for comprehensiveness. Based on the automatic setup of the databases, geographic or established years for electronic searches, limiters will be used. The search terms consist of identifying only children and youth with synonymous terms for colorism. An open search with no limiters will be conducted within 10 EBSCOhost databases and Google Scholar. Additionally, African American Communities, American Indian History and Culture, and JSTOR limiter will consist of electronic searches over the last 20 years, 2000 thru 2020. Social Services Abstracts limiters for the publication date range will include the last 20 years and geographic area United States. We will include studies with all research designs; descriptives (case-study, observation, survey), correlational (case-control study, observational study), experimental (field experiment, experiment with random assignment, quasi-experiment), and reviews (literature review, systematic review, meta-analysis). This is also inclusive of grey literature (theses, dissertations, and periodicals). Colorism studies included are surrounding children and youth in schools within the United States. We will exclude literature pertaining to colorism studies among adults in schools and studies outside of the United States.

2.3 Search strategy

Search methods will be conducted in databases that strategically considers the main research question. The following EBSCOhost databases are inclusive of Academic Search Complete (comprehensive database), Education Abstracts (H.W. Wilson), Educational Administration Abstracts, ERIC (educational resource), Primary Search (primary school research), Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Social Work Abstracts, and Race Relations. Other databases used consist of African American Communities, American Indian History and Culture, JSTOR (subject area scholarly journals), Social Services Abstracts, and Google Scholar (a database with sources across disciplines). Per consultation with university librarian an open search was recommended for the EBSCOhost and Google Scholar based on several terms inputted in the databases (the more search terms used the possibility of limited generated journal articles). African American Communities, American Indian History and Culture, and JSTOR databases have less capability to add limiters such as selecting United States for the geographical area is restricted. Other data may be generated from the references listed on other journal articles retrieved.

2.4 Study selection

The title and abstract screenings will occur independently from two reviewers. A third party will resolve conflicts of interest before moving to the full-text screening process. This is all confirmed by eligibility, consistent with the inclusive and exclusive criteria. The two reviewers will peruse the full-text to establish if the journal article meets criteria. Consensus of full-text will occur by consulting with third party person. We will use the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA), which includes the components of a four-phase PRISMA diagram (Hawke et al., 2017). For efficiency, the Covidence software will be utilized to screen the journal articles.

2.5 Charting the data

The extracted data will consist of 1). Author(s), year of publication, study location, 2). Study population, 3). Aims of the study, 4). Methodology, and 5). Results (outcomes and experiences). One reviewer will extract data from the studies adhering to the data extraction form with minor modification of excluding intervention for example if none of the studies include it. Scoping reviews do not access the merit of the evidence found in each study (Hawke et al., 2017; Levac et al., 2010; Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). See Table 1: Data to be Extracted from Identified Literature.

2.6 Collating, summarizing, and reporting the results

We will construct a synopsis of both analytical and thematic context using the scope of literature findings. This will include qualitative and a numerical descriptive summary. The collected information will be detailed in a table(s) to provide the current work related to colorism in schools as a one framework stage based on the reporting of results and purpose of the study (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

2.7 Stakeholder consultation

After providing a summary of results, we will garner the feedback of education stakeholders with interest in colorism. Through other projects, we have been able to consult with colorism experts including authors, poets, students of color in public schools, and advocates for increasing the awareness of how colorism manifests in schools. Hawke et al. (2017) suggest a consultation phase with these different stakeholder groups that includes 8-10 stakeholders per group. Following this method, we will present findings to each group and ask for their feedback on accuracy of the findings with what their experience and expertise are in colorism and public education. We will pursue institutional review board approval from our university.

2.8 Proposed timeline

Our scoping review will take approximately 15 months. The development and planning stages began in September 2019. We anticipate November 2020 for scoping review study completion. The sequence can be seen in Table 2 Proposed Timeline for Scoping Review Completion.

3. Discussion

Racial disparities research permeates the educational field due to the enduring nature of gaps in outcomes between students of color and white students. Skin color and phenotypic feature are increasingly understood as the mechanism through which race operates in schools. It is imperative to the work of decreasing racial disparities that student experiences with colorism in schools be exhaustively explored for evidence on how to continue to raise awareness of colorism's impact on outcomes for students of color. This scoping review will be a highly referenced work for education researchers, practitioners, and policy makers as they consider that addressing colorism is also as crucial as addressing racism.

Table 1. Data to be extracted from identified literature.

	Data to be Extracted
1. Descriptive information	Author(s) Title Reference Publication type Year of publication, Location of the work Study population if applicable Type of school setting discussed Ethnic group
2. Aims of the work Research questions: • What are the lived experiences of students of color with varying skin tones? • What are the disparities in levels of access to college prep courses, gifted and talented programs? • Are darker skinned students of color faced with even higher rates of referrals to law enforcement in schools? • Do they graduate at the same rates as their lighter skin counter parts? • What bias and discrimination do they face from teachers and staff in selection of honors, awards, and other accolades? • What methods have been used to address colorism in schools or with students of color in schools?	**3. Methodology** **4. Results** (outcomes and experiences of students in schools)

Table 2. Proposed timeline for scoping review completion.

Stage	Task	Time	Owner(s)
1	Identifying the research question and writing the protocol	Months 1-3	(JC, LK)
2	Identifying relevant studies	Months 4-5	(JC, LK)
3	Study selection	Month 5-6	(JC, LK)
4	Charting the data	Month 6-7	(JC, LK)
5	Collating, summarizing and reporting the results	Months 8-10	(JC, LK)
6	Consultation exercise Writeup	Months 11-15	Academic/content experts, (JC, LK)

Declarations

Competing Interests: The authors declare they have no competing interests.

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