

COVID-19, controversial laws on abortion, a heightening in exposure of police brutality and a pressure to hold police accountable for their unjustifiable actions are all concepts that have occurred in the past year. These circumstances have pushed me to finally begin to realize and accept my ignorance. I believe these events have caused an increase in people to dive deeper into what they thought they knew about racism, white privilege and the influence America's systems and institutions have on these concepts. People's opinions and beliefs on issues in our society have intensified. More discussions have been initiated that should have commenced long before now. Why did it take the publicity of the murder of George Floyd for so many people to become aware of the severity of police brutality against people of color? Why do some people still not see the urgency of these issues in our society? People's inherently racist and biased views along with evidence of police brutality against people of color can be applied to the concept of the collective symbolic view of dark skin.

I am a White woman so I of course have not directly or personally experienced any form of racism. I also will never be able to understand the feeling of the threat that police bring to people of color. However, I have seen acts of racism and micro-aggressions play out in front of me. I also see how people, especially my close peers and family, react and interact on the topic of racism. My observations have brought realization that many people are uneducated about racism in America. People have a hard time realizing these things because of their culture's collective ideas of race and societal norms. They have a collective representation of what race represents that contributes to the oppression people of color experience. When white people are told

don't understand because it is outside of their collective belief system that they have known their entire life.

White privilege can be described as a benefit that white people experience in society that people of color do not have. White privilege comes in many forms and also poses as controversial to some. Peggy McIntosh, in her essay, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*, lists many privileges that she has noticed and become aware of over the years as a white person (1990). One of many white privileges that I experience is not being afraid of the police. Growing up I viewed the police authorities as protectors and felt safer when they were around. When I got pulled over on a highway I was not in fear of being a subject of unexplainable brutal force. However, people of color, especially black men are taught to keep their hand up and in sight when pulled over. They are likely to feel more in danger in public spaces when police are around instead of seeing them as a resource. Police have an extensive history of tragic traffic stops, unjust killings of people of color, and overall more arrests and targeting of people of color for minor offenses compared to white people.

Every person has bias whether it be explicit or implicit. Internalized oppression can have detrimental effects on society and specific oppressed communities. People gather learned behaviors from their environment and the collective representation you are surrounded by. Jennifer Eberhardt, a Stanford University psychology professor, covers many aspects of racial bias in America. She gives great insight into the importance of us tackling our own biases. She covers the concept of the "other-race effect" and also conducts her own study to analyze the results for herself. Studies

faces of their same race than they do other races (Eberhardt, 2019). She backs up this idea with a neuroimaging study that showed an increased brain response to images of faces of the same race for both white and black participants compared to images of the other race.

Eberhardt also does a lot of studies with police departments to see how and why police use more force and arrest more black citizens than white ones. Her studies and presentations reveal that police use different language, body and verbal, when pulling over or approaching black people when on duty. When describing a suspect or targeted criminal over the car intercom systems they use words that present racial bias, automatically setting up a negative idea of the suspect in the police's heads. Studies have also shown that people are more likely to correlate words of crime and danger with black race.

Emile Durkheim defines collective consciousness as concepts, ideas and beliefs that a community or society shares. Collective beliefs may or may not have supportive evidence. Instead, it could be derived from enough people stating and believing that it is true. For example, religion, conspiracy theories, and gift giving are some collective ideas held by groups. Other sociologists, Michael Omi and Howard Winant describe the

Police brutality in America is becoming more covered in the media and social movements and activists are bringing more awareness to the subject. People have a view of black skin color that leads them to negative and dangerous assumptions of black people's character. Police, along with other people, have a collective view of what black skin represents in society. Police respond differently to descriptions of subjects

criminal. Eberhardt's in-depth studies provide police body camera evidence of the difference in dialect police officers use depending on if the person they are pulling over is black or white. Police use more informal, less respectful speech when confronting black people compared to a relaxed and comforting speech when talking to white people.

Police have a certain level of order over all citizens, however, they have a particular superiority over black people. White people's self-made dominance over people of color goes all the way back to slavery. Of course, society has progressed since then, however the control that white people hold over people of color based on the symbolism of their skin color is still relevant. It is prevalent systematically and institutionally. White people, more specifically white males, hold more leadership positions, CEO jobs, and representation in politics. Black people are more likely to be arrested and are a huge percentage of inmates in prisons while also being victims of police brutality way more than white people. Police still have a dominance over while emitting fear from people of color.

The collective idea people have on people of color could partially be a result of the symbolic meaning skin color has in society. The symbolic meaning used to be derived from slavery and that black people were invaluable and not seen as human beings to white people. The symbolic meaning of skin color is now more based on people of color being more criminalized and judged based on the assumptions their dark skin brings. However, the movements of people advocating for the way dark skin is viewed are growing and gaining more representation and support. Many efforts are

collective biases. Collective ideas can change and hopefully the collective negative views of people of color will continue to be progressively transformed.

Eberhardt, J. L. (2019). *Biased: Uncovering the hidden prejudice that shapes what we see, think, and do*. Penguin Random House LLC.